

Har Lampkins

A NARRATIVE OF
MOUNTAIN LIFE,
ON THE BORDERS
OF THE TWO VIRGINIAS

ABEL PATTON



Class PZ3

Book .P278 H

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

"HAR LAMPKINS"

A NARRATIVE OF MOUNTAIN LIFE, ON THE
BORDERS OF THE TWO VIRGINIAS



BY
ABEL PATTON

35

THE
Abbey Press

PUBLISHERS

114

FIFTH AVENUE

London

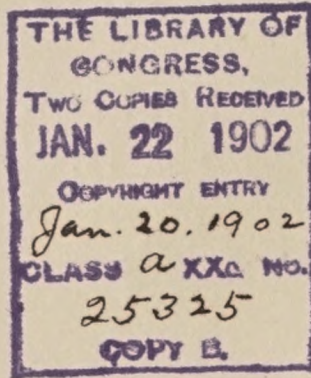
NEW YORK

Montreal



PZ3

.P278H

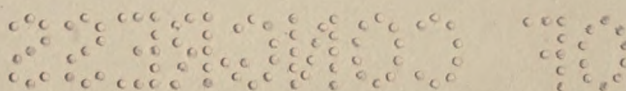
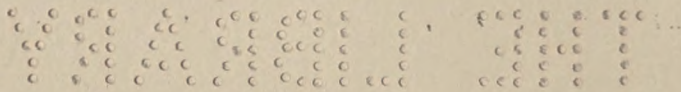


Copyright, 1901,

by

THE

Abbey Press



A. S. G. Jan. 24/02

PREFACE.

THIS narrative is intended to give a true insight into some of the characters in Southwest Virginia, as they were before the railroad touched those blue-grass hills, or their beautiful streams were ever dynamited for its trout.

The inhabitants were simple, industrious, honorable, swore vengeance against their enemies and died if the occasion demanded for their friends. Things have changed since then, but some of these good people live yet in their quiet way, and are happy and contented as such people always are.

The characters set forth in this narrative and the principal features of this story are true, and I have tried to do justice to them, striving not to censure too strongly my enemies, nor praise too lavishly my warmest friends. The majority of the characters are living and the bank of Petersville is still doing business on the same site, but in a fine building and Mr. Haines still occupies the position of President to this sound financial institution.

My diary has been of no little assistance to me in chronicling the events happening some fifteen years since, and I am greatly indebted to Henry Johnson for his assistance.

I send the little volume forth neither begging to its severest critics, nor catering to its friends, for why should I apologize for relating a true account of facts.

WELCH, WEST VIRGINIA,

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Home Leaving.....	9
II. Captain Johnson.....	13
III. Uncle Eli Jones.....	21
IV. School opens.....	29
V. An Evening on the Cliffs.....	37
VI. An Encounter with George Perkins.....	41
VII. A Night at Captain Johnson's.....	52
VIII. The Attack.....	58
IX. The Dance at Captain Johnson's.....	68
X. "Here's to you, Phil".....	76
XI. George Painter's Defeat.....	79
XII. A Visit to the Perkins' Homestead.....	88
XIII. The Will.....	95
XIV. A Difficulty with Painter.....	103
XV. Dixie and Yankee Doodle.....	114
XVI. The Circuit Rider.....	125
XVII. At Uncle Eli's.....	139
XVIII. An Interview with Henry in the Jail.....	155
XIX. At Home.....	163
XX. President of the Bank of Petersville.....	170
XXI. The Confession.....	183
XXII. Conclusion.....	191

“HAR LAMPKINS.”

CHAPTER I.

HOME LEAVING.

“FATHER,” said I one beautiful May morning, as I laid down an old copy of Ray’s Practical Arithmetic, and blew out a saucer of grease that my mother had fixed for me to study by, for it was not yet day, “I am going to hunt for the black sow, but I want to know if I can have one of her pigs if I can find her?”

“Now, Harry, what in the world do you want with a pig, and one of ’em black sow’s pigs, I don’t know. You air the queerest boy that I know of. Thar! thar! Let’s not argy, you can have one.”

“I will tell you what I want to do with it; I am going to grow it into a hog, and sell it and go to school on the money.”

I called my dog and started; as I was going

towards the woods I heard my father say: "That is the quarest boy that I ever saw; he don't do nothing but talk about books, and he will never be worth shucks until that is out of him."

"Now, pap, don't scold the child; he loves his books and some day we will be proud of him."

"Proud of him," said my father, "stuffing his hide full of book-larning; won't be as much 'count as old Tray, and he's too dratted lazy to holler when he is hurt; thar, let's not argy, but I do believe that confounded name that you 'sisted on calling him had some ter do with it. I never saw a Harry that was worth a cuss."

My mother knew that it was useless to argue with him and said nothing more in my defense, and then and there I made the resolve that mother should not be disappointed in me.

She was the only one I had ever heard defend me or speak a word in my behalf. My father believed that it was wrong for a poor boy to strive for an education, and the one who did was a hopeless young man. I studied late at night by a pine knot, and when I was twenty years old, with the assistance of the country school teacher, I was able to master Ray's Practical Arithmetic. My big brothers taunted

me with the remark, "Fixing yourself up for office, are you?" and the like expressions; I paid no attention to these remarks, as I had been teased by every one, since I was a boy, and I had at least learned not to pay any attention to them, but I felt the remarks keenly, being of an extremely sensitive nature. In fact I found no congenial companions but my books and my mother; I could scarcely tell which I loved better, but there came a time when I knew that I loved my mother better than anything on earth. Leaving home teaches every boy this truth.

Early one cold, frosty, December morning while I stood down at the pen looking at my pet hog, a stranger rode up and asked me if I knew of any hogs for sale. "I have one," said I, and I sold him the black sow's pig for fourteen dollars. I had scarcely pocketed the money when my brother Sam came down the lane, whistling "Betty Brown," with an old mountain rifle on his shoulder; father was just behind him with a long, keen, butcher knife; father and Sam spoke to the stranger and said: "We are going to kill a shoat for dinner; get right down and see the fun." Although I had raised the hog from a pig, and it was mine, I saw that they intended to kill it; "Father," said I, "I have

sold that hog to Mr. Painter here, and he has paid me for it, and you must not kill it." "Thunderation, Sam," father exclaimed, "if that boy hain't gone plumb, clean crazy; fust thing we know he'll sell us out of house and home; now, Harry," he continued, "give that cash right back ter the stranger; I'm boss yet, I guess. Larn ye ter ask about things on this here place, mought er let yer sold it, but nary a tater now; I've got to have that pig's blood to 'pease my wrath. No, stranger, I am boss here; couldn't buy that hog for a soap gourd full of gold."

I had never quarreled with my father and I did not this time, but I returned the money as he told me and went to the house. I told mother what had happened and that I was going to earn my own living; she did not object to my going away from home, but I could see that her heart was full. She placed a silver dollar in my hands and kissed me, and as she did so, the hot tears fell upon my face and ran down my cheeks. I kissed her and started down the road towards the woods where the birds were twittering and the squirrels scampered across my path, and where the birch lapped its hanging branches in the brook that was laughing and rushing by.

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN JOHNSON.

I HAD heard that away down in the mountains of Virginia, they were in need of school teachers, so across the Clinch and Paint Lick Mountains and many little hills and valleys my weary steps led me on towards my destination. On the sixth night, as the sun was shooting his long, silvery needles across the valleys, foot-sore, tired and worn, I came up to where an old gentleman, with clean shaven face and brilliant black eyes was watching some negroes gathering pumpkins and placing them in a wagon close by.

I asked if I could find a place to sleep that night in the near vicinity.

"What is your name?" he asked. "Harry Lampkins," I answered.

"Harry Lampkins," he muttered, and sat as if thinking for some little time, "yes, sir, Harry, you just climb up here on the fence and rest a bit; we will go down to the house pretty soon, and you can't find a better place in this neigh-

borhood than my house. No, sir," he continued, "Captain Johnson was never known to turn a stranger away hungry or tired."

It was not long until we went down to the house, which was a large brick building, furnished elegantly, considering the distance from any city. We had been in the room but a little while when I heard the voice of a girl singing some simple ballad in a low sweet tone. The voice was strangely sweet and mellow and it thrilled my soul and aroused my curiosity to see the sweet singer herself, but I dreaded to meet her as I was very timid in the presence of ladies, or at least I had always been when I was at home. I can remember that my brother Sam was a favorite among the country lasses, and that I could not get one of them so much as to look at me, when he was around. They all called me stupid and awkward and I believe that they were right, for everything that I said sounded stupid and out of place. If I attempted to say anything witty I was laughed at and not the remark. Others could say things that I could see nothing in, and everybody laughed, so I came to consider myself the biggest fool that had ever been permitted to run loose about the country; in fact I had thought seriously of asking the authorities to have me arrested

and tried on the charge of lunacy, and sent to the insane asylum, where I could be treated and return and enter the society and feel at ease with those whom I had known since my earliest childhood. I was thinking of these things when Captain Johnson said to me: "Young man, you say that your name is Harry Lampkins, and that you were raised in this state?" I told him that he was right and expected him to continue but he remained in his meditative mood, and sat thus until supper was announced. We arose and went out to supper. The old gentleman told his wife and daughter who I was, and I found them both to be very agreeable. I also found that I could talk with greater ease than I had ever before experienced in the presence of ladies. However, I said very little, fearing that I might make a blunder, knowing that it was my fashion to say the wrong thing at the wrong time. I enjoyed my supper very much and ate heartily, as it took something of a good square meal to satisfy an appetite that run a machine six feet two inches in height, all of its members being proportionably large, my feet not excepted.

We were sitting around the fire talking pleasantly of the events common to every neighborhood when we heard some one rap on

the door. "Come in," said the Captain and a great burly fellow, rough as pig-iron, presented himself.

"Good evening, George," said the Captain. "Have a seat."

"Not much time ter stay," replied George. "I allow we are going to have some smart of a snow purty soon; least Eli Jones says so, and pap allows he was never known ter fail prophe-sying, and he has known him nigh on to thirty years."

"Anything wrong to-night, George," the Captain asked.

"No, nothing wrong, further than pap says, that school ort ter be going, and he allows if you will lend him old Tobe he'll ride over and get one over at it purty soon."

"I soon learned that they could not get a teacher very easily in that neighborhood and I ventured to say that I would like to try my hand, and go to work at once with the school if they thought I would suit them. To this the Captain readily assented, saying that he was a trustee and that Eli Jones was another one, and that he would go with me over to Jones' and help me to get the school.

"Now, look a-here, stranger," put in George, "this school has never been teached out, and if

yer don't keep yer eyes skint yer won't neither."

I told him that I thought I could manage it, or at least I would try.

"You're a purty big fellow, but I'll tell yer," said George, "I'm er schoolboy my own self, and if you treat us right there'll be no trouble, but if yer don't, then, to be plain with yer, we'll lick yer as show as gun's iron."

"I expect to treat you right," I replied, "and I expect you to be one of the best boys in the school, for I think that we can get along together nicely."

"Just as you're mind to," he continued, "but thar hain't been no teacher since I was thirteen years old, I ain't larruped, sooner or later, and if yer get off yer'll do well."

I saw that this chap would be a rough customer and unless I could gain his good-will I would be likely to have trouble with him. After he was gone Captain Johnson told me how he had thrashed every teacher in the neighborhood for the last six years, and that no one could control him, "but," he added, "we will go over to Eli Jones' and get the school at any rate." He then asked in a very cautious manner something concerning my origin; who my mother was and her father's name, and in-

quired about my family in many little ways, and he impressed me that he was a very peculiar man.

He sat in moody silence for a long time after this, while his daughter Lucy, whom I had heard singing when I first came, sat quietly reading some new books, or at least pretended to be, for when my eyes were turned suddenly in that direction I thought that I caught a glimpse of the deep brown eyes: in fact sometimes they were looking at me as though she was studying my face; this may have been imagination on my part, but I was strangely happy; for months afterwards those eyes haunted me. If I strolled across the field her figure, gracefully formed, just tipped the hill-top; if I chanced to look towards the clouds her image was floating there and her eyes had a look that the stars wore, and ten thousands of sweet thoughts rushed through my brain and all centered in her eyes. I thought of her by day and dreamed of her by night, and at last I called myself a fool and a superstitious old woman.

When we had sat and talked for some time, the Captain took me to my room; such luxury I had never seen before; everything was lovely and I felt that I was in a paradise, for

this was the first time in my life that I had ever been in a bedroom nicely furnished. I slept that night and dreamed of the Elysian Fields of happiness and of heaven, and in them all I could see a young girl with dark eyes and radiant hair. In my dream I was standing outside the pearly white gates, watching the happiness and joy of others. I was thinking of my homespun jeans coat and my brogan shoes, and longing to enter there and explore those beautiful fields, and laugh and be happy like those that I could see. I looked in the center of the happiest group of beautiful young ladies and handsome young men and I could see a girl with long, raven locks, and dark brown eyes and teeth of pearly whiteness, and they were all making love to her.

I soon lost sight of the beautiful creature, and while straining my eager gaze to locate her again, some one touched my elbow and I turned around and was face to face with the loveliest creature that I had ever seen. I stood waiting for her to speak; I caught a glimpse of the starlike eyes, and recognized the Captain's daughter, Lucy Johnson. She said to me in the softest voice, "You do not appear happy like a young man of your strength and beauty should."

I looked myself from head to foot, for this was the first time in my life that any one had ever called me beautiful or good. She must have read my thoughts for she quickly said, "Oh! your clothes are all right; the truest hearts often beat in the homespun clothes. I know," she went on, "that most people think it is the gold that glitters that makes the man, and that we are often measured by our bank account."

I had caught her hand and bent down to kiss it, when her father and an angry lover, the man to whom I had sold my hog, dashed up; her father bore me to the ground and the lover bore away my lovely Lucy in his arms.

Some one rapped on the door and I heard the Captain's voice calling; my dream was over; the sun was shining; I was up and dressed in a jiffy and enjoying the pure air of the mountains on a December morning.

CHAPTER III.

UNCLE ELI JONES.

AFTER breakfast we rode over to Eli Jones' and the Captain told him that I wanted the school.

"Wall," said he, "yer can get her, and from your looks you strike us about right."

I told him that I would do the best that I could if they gave me the school.

"You bet your boots, Mr. Lampkins," said he, "them cuss-fired boys down thar beat the old Scratch himself; I am religious, I am, but them boys come mighty nigh making me cuss ever time I think of 'em. Why, blast my hide, if George Perkins didn't cause me to swear; by the Eternal Devil, he did, at my own table, and the Circuit Rider thar, but I kivered it up though, the best I could, and helped his plate to two more pieces of chicken, and I told Samantha after he had gone that he looked like he loved me better than he ever did before, and now, Lampkins, if yer'll go down thar and thrash the whole gang of 'em—'em—

'em—Devils, I must say it, for nary other word in the English language will do ; thrash 'em the fust day and let George Perkins be among 'em, I'll gin yer the school fer five years at a raised salary. Oh ! stranger," he continued, "why didn't yer come along before I jined the Church and I could a-used words to describe 'em boys. It'd take some awful strong, yes, sir, awful strong words, to describe 'em ; but my wife," he went on, "will make you think that they are not so bad. Samantha can't hardly bear ter hear yer talk mean of the Devil she's so all-fired good."

The hands of the old wooden clock pointed to a quarter of twelve when Uncle Eli went back to a wooden chest and brought out an old-fashioned demijohn of whisky, some maple sugar, a glass and a cup of water.

"Yes, stranger," said he, pouring out some of the whisky, "I always keep licker about the house ; I don't know how you feel about it, but there is one argument in its favor that even Samantha and the Circuit Rider can't down ; no, sir, it is the best thing on the top side of the earth for a snake bite ; this is not in snake time, yer know, and up to winter afore las' I had many a hot argument with Samantha ; she said I ort ter keep it in snake time but out of

season it was wrong. Now don't you know I watched all summer, day in and day out ; lost a crap, I did, trying to locate a snake den. One day I saw several under an old chest-nut stump ; I had my gun with me and could have killed 'em all, but nary a time did I ; I'd a fed 'em snakes to keep 'em alive if it needs be. I said nothing about it 'till December 23d, 189-, thar were about two inches of snow on the ground and I went up and dug and dug until I could prize out that old stump ; arter awhile it tumbled over, and I killed ten good-sized rattlers. I took one ter the house and placed the rest about one hundred yards down the hill ; it was fun ; them snakes was so stiff and cold when I'd hit their heads the rattles would fly off the end of ther tails ; when I got ter ther house I found that I was in luck ; it was Quarterly Meeting Saturday, and thar sot the Elder and the Circuit Rider and Samantha, all talking about a great temperance lecture, and the evils of corn licker. I opened fire with my rattler ; Samantha hollered ; the Elder kicked over his cheer and the Circuit Rider knocked down that old wooden clock and broke it, that been running round forty years. I cared nothing for that ; I was gaining a victory. "Now," says I, "Talk about whisky and

corn licker, but I want ter say right here, religion or no religion, I'll never be without licker, the best that corn can make, in my house again, by the Eternal Devil, I won't. Samantha asked if I 'had just saw one snake,' and I, in an excited manner, said, Moses and Aaron, I killed a whole army of 'em. I took 'em up and showed 'em all the snakes with their heads turned towards the house; this settled it; I had it all my own way. I went right back ter ther house and fixed a toddy for us all. The Elder, the Circuit Rider and Samantha took theirs as a Sacrament, but I took mine as a straight drink, because I had won the victory. Samantha don't know about that snake story yet. The Elder preached a regular rip-snorting sermon the next day on 'Take a little wine for your stomach's sake,' and told 'em of my fight with the snakes, and made me out a great hero; said I was right in keeping licker in my house for snake bites, and don't you know that he is on that Circuit yet, and the popularest preacher since Lem Sanders' time, who carried a bottle of the purest with him all the time." Uncle Eli then lifted the tumbler to his lips and drank it down saying, "Here's ter yer," and when he was through smacking his mouth he said, "I don't want you

to misunderstand me, I am with the preacher and I am with Samantha all the way through, and 'fore ye are here along you'll disciver that I am sacramentest takingest man in the whole neighborhood. I believe in it ; it is the sweetest part of religion, and I tell Samantha that it ought ter be done oftener, as I am willing to risk my reputation as a prophet that it is carried on extensively in the Golden City."

By this time dinner was ready and we sat down to partake of the hospitalities of Uncle Eli, who returned thanks and muttered something to the Lord about the people taking the sacrament more frequently ; the meal was well prepared and consisted of goodly things ever known to the mountain home among the blue-grass hills ; Mrs. Jones, a motherly old lady, was so kind that I was almost afraid to stop eating, for fear that she would think that I had not done justice to the occasion. Dinner was about over when a young lady came into the room and Mrs. Jones introduced her as her daughter. She was a blonde with bright golden hair and deep blue eyes ; her figure was slender and graceful and she had the appearance of a girl of about twenty summers.

The Captain had been sitting in moody silence and only spoke when some remark was

addressed directly to him ; when we had finished dinner and were inside the sitting-room again, I was introduced to a young man, Captain Johnson's son ; he was tall and of splendid physique ; and had dark brown eyes and curly black hair, and I thought him a truly handsome man. I liked his appearance and determined to cultivate his friendship, for I thought that he would make a congenial companion. He had escorted Miss Minnie Jones home, and I soon learned that they had been sweethearts almost since early childhood ; this pleased Uncle Eli, but young Johnson's father and mother looked upon it only as a little pastime for their son.

A few moments later Mrs. Jones came in and told Henry to go out to dinner, as Miss Minnie was waiting for him.

The Captain was more cheerful after dinner, and when he left he insisted that I should spend part of my time at his home ; I thanked him and he rode away at a cantering gallop on his fine bay.

I engaged board with Uncle Eli and that evening we rode over the neighborhood and announced that there would be school on the following Monday. I was left alone with his daughter, who, any one could see at a glance,

had seen more of society than was to be seen in that country; she was well read and a fluent talker and full of mischief. I could see that her life had been a happy one and that so far no care had wrinkled her fair brow. She told me, some time during our evening talk, she and Lucy Johnson had gone to school together somewhere over in Tennessee and that Henry would complete his course in the law the following fall. "I have one of his books," she added, and sprang up and lightly tripping across the room brought over a volume of Blackstone and handed it to me. I began to scan its pages and became interested in it. Miss Jones told me that she had read it through and I said to her, "Will you let me read it and instruct me in the difficult places?" She laughed and said, "Oh, Mr. Lampkins, I cannot teach what I do not know, but we will read together if you like."

I told her that I liked the idea and teasingly added that we would get Mr. Johnson to be our teacher.

"You must not say that any more," she said laughingly, "or I will think that you are a naughty boy." At this point her mother called her for some purpose and I fell to musing. Here I had been talking to two pretty young

ladies, one wealthy and the other beautiful and good, and I felt no embarrassment; only two weeks before that I had helped a country lassie on her horse and had made such a bad effort that my brother Sam laughed at me and I had to give her sweetheart a sound thrashing, who would not accept my apology. I tried to explain to him.

"I'm going to wallop you right here and now," he said. "I've got bile on my stomach and I had rather knock you than to eat."

I told him that I was of a fighting family, but the other boys usually did the fighting; when this bluff would not go I tried to beg off, and the harder I begged the more determined he was to fight.

"If you have so much bile on your stomach," I said to him, "and nothing but a fight will do you, I will fix you so that you can spit some of it off."

I hit him a right-hander in the stomach, which doubled him up against a walnut stump, where he spit bile to his heart's content, and he was nursing three broken ribs when I left the neighborhood.

CHAPTER IV.

SCHOOL OPENS.

MONDAY morning came and with it school opened, and I found myself in an almost square log building with thirty boys and girls; some of them wore bright and happy faces and were cleanly dressed in homespun clothing; others were shabbily dressed, sulky, with their hair reaching down to their eyes and hanging in strings. I opened school with a short lecture on the duties of the teacher to his students and vice versa and of the good that we could do by hard study and assisting each other. I told them of the different great men who came from mountain homes and log-cabin school-houses and held up Abraham Lincoln as chief among them. I finished my lecture by saying: "We must always come to the schoolhouse with clean faces and with hair combed and brushed." I then assumed the vexatious duty of arranging classes, when some one in the rear of the house said to me: "Ain't you a-going to give us rules to go by?" "Yes," I replied,

"there is one rule and the only one that you will be expected to live up to." I saw that they were all surprised and looked at each other in astonishment and gave them time to think, and then continued: "Yes, boys and girls, there is one thing that is required of you and just one thing that you are not expected to do." Our rules will be simply do right, and you are expected to keep this rule."

As the day wore away I noticed a great deal of whispering among the boys, and among those were George Perkins, who, the reader will remember, I met at the Captain's the first night that I spent in the neighborhood.

At recess they flocked together and held a close conference under the old oak tree back of the schoolhouse and then they shook hands and broke up as though they had agreed upon some plan of action, and I expected it that evening but it did not come. The evening passed off quietly. I dismissed and walked towards Uncle Eli's, feeling quite contented and happy.

I had reached the yard fence, climbed upon it and was resting there, when I heard Uncle Eli in a hot argument with some one. I heard him say, "Bless my hide if I don't know that man will fight like er wild cat. I can see it in

his face. Yes, sir, I will stake a pint of corn licker he will thrash George Perkins before the week is out, and if he does I will take the sacrament three times a day es long es he es here."

"Oh, papa, don't think that everybody is bloodthirsty ; I am sure that Mr. Lampkins appears like a nice young man."

"Jest what I say, Minnie ; that's the reason he will fight."

"I don't know him," I heard another voice say, "but if he kin fight like my old Colonel he kin teach that school."

When I went to the house I was introduced to a man about fifty years of age, Philip Jackson by name. After talking for a few moments about things common to all simple mountain folks Uncle Eli turned to me, "Lampkins," said he, "how did yer come outer-day with 'em cuss-fired boys."

"All right," said I, "everything runs smoothly enough, Uncle Eli."

"Jest trying yer faith," said he, "I will bet a pint of corn licker."

"They'll try yer afore a week's out and I'm betting on yer, ol' boy ; flog 'em, flog 'em like the Devil and I will raise yer salary the day yer thrash George Perkins ; I jest wish, Lampkins,

that I could cuss 'em boys; I'd enjoy it more than I can tell yer, but Samantha says that a man can't cuss and take the sacrament and I'm with her; yes, sir, I'm with Samantha ever time the sacrament passes eroun'."

"That's all right," said Phil Jackson, "I sed it an I'll stick ter it. If yer can fight like my ole Kernel yer can teach that school, stranger."

I told him that I was not a fighting man, but I thought that I would be able to teach the school out. When I said this I saw a look of disappointment flit across Uncle Eli's face. He was disappointed in me and expected me to fight. He looked at me a few moments and said: "Lampkins, a man of yer size ort ter do some splendid fightin', and I bet with Phil here, a pint of the best corn licker ever made in Clinch Mountain that yer'll thrash 'em boys, and now yer ain't a-goin' ter do it."

"Oh, papa," cried Minnie, "don't want everybody to be fighting."

"That's all right, Minnie; I like ter see a young man develop his muscles and at the same time improve the ways and means of some of the cuss-fired boys in this here neighborhood."

"If he kin fight like my ole Kernel," said Phil, "he ken teach that school," When he

said this he pulled a deck of cards from his pocket and proposed a game with Uncle Eli.

I declined their invitation to join in the game and took down the volume of Blackstone from the shelf, and began studying it. "Nary a time," said Uncle Eli, "no more harm in a game than taking the sacrament, and now, Phil, every time I beat, I take a drink of corn licker, and every time you win you do the same." They both produced their "Black Betty's" and set them upon their right and as Phil carefully set his treasure down he said: "If thar is anything on top of the yearth that will make me play it is corn licker."

Some one stopped at the gate and I arose to see the newcomer, and I saw that Miss Minnie Jones had met him at the gate and that it was Henry Johnson.

They walked up to the house together.

"Hello, Henry," said Uncle Eli; "have a seat," continued he, "and tell us how your folks air, while Phil and myself finish this here game."

"Play, Phil. Hold on there, Phil," said Uncle Eli, "blast my cats ef yer can cheat me."

"Didn't try to cheat yer," said Phil.

"You tried ter steal ther game."

"I didn't do it."

"Ye're a liar!" shouted Uncle Eli.

"Hold on, Eli, you've named my fighting word and if yer can't fight like my ole Kernel I'll wallop the daylites out er yer, and I'll——"

"Stop!" broke in Uncle Eli, "you've done named my fighting word and yer knowed it, we'll jest go over ter the big sink hole and fight it out."

Each one gathered his own flask, and Uncle Eli took the precaution to shove the deck into his pants pocket, and they both started to the sink hole in white heat.

When they had fully cleared the door, Henry and Minnie burst out laughing. Seeing my puzzled expression they explained to me that it was an old game with them.

Mrs. Jones was away and they thought that Miss Minnie was busily engaged about the kitchen and household affairs, and their game would not be interrupted by either of them, and would not have been if Henry had not come to spend the evening, but as he did the sink hole was their only place of refuge, and to this they went under the cover of a fictitious insult that must be resented.

"They think," said Miss Minnie, "that we do not know this and mother doesn't. It won't be long until we will see them return arm-in-arm as happy as two children."

We all laughed and I was very much amused at the cunning of these two men to escape the lecture of Mother Jones.

Miss Minnie excused herself and Henry and I were left together. We talked of the different professions and at last we touched upon the profession of law, and I told him that I hoped some time to be able to enter that profession. We talked on pleasantly until supper was announced by Mrs. Jones.

"Uncle Eli and Phil," I said to Henry, "must be fighting yet, as they are not here for supper."

After supper was over I strolled out leaving Henry and his sweetheart together; I wanted to be out and dream of the dark eyes that I had seen the first night that I spent at the Captain's. I strolled down by the spring and across the strip of woodland that lay close by, and as I walked on I heard voices that seemed very much excited.

"And," said Phil, "you've (hic) tok the sacrament (hic) once more than I (hic) have."

"Well, let it all go (hic), and go to the house (hic), but I played for that one drink."

I strolled on, and soon after returned to the house as Henry was just leaving. I bade him good night and went up to my room. The

next morning at breakfast Mrs. Jones told me that Henry was coming over the following Sunday and his sister was coming with him. My heart leaped to my throat and I tried to hide my embarrassment, and murmured something, far from being intelligent, about being glad. The week dragged itself too slowly by. I looked forward anxiously to the first day of the week and my heart beat faster when I thought of meeting lovely Lucy Johnson again. My dream returned and I remembered how angry her father looked and how his dark eyes struck fire and shot darts of hatred at me. I could see her lovely white hands outstretched towards me and her long beautiful tresses floating to the breeze as her lover bore her away, but I remembered that she did not speak to me. I wondered what she thought of me, or whether or not she thought of me at all, and my thoughts drifted away on the silvery sea of love's first dream, but I could see beyond the breakers that it was tinged with a border of gold.

CHAPTER V.

AN EVENING ON THE CLIFFS.

SUNDAY morning came and I was up long before the dew had ceased to hang in crystal drops from the leaves of the trees.

I walked down to the spring and across the fields to watch the sun rise. I walked with long strides down by the old mill and back by the cliff, making a circle and returning to the house. Breakfast was ready and I felt like eating after my exercise. I thought Miss Minnie looked sweeter than I had ever seen her. Her cheeks wore the bloom of health and she was in excellent spirits. I dreamed through breakfast and wondered if she was as deeply concerned about her guests as myself. The morning was yet young when Henry and his sister rode up. Miss Jones met them down at the gate, and while Henry fastened the horses, they kissed each other affectionately, and in that kiss I caught a glimpse of Miss Johnson's face, and it wore the same expression that it did in my dream.

They walked up to the house with Henry, and I shook hands with Henry and his sister. As Miss Johnson's hand touched mine I felt my old embarrassment returning. She pretended not to notice it and I soon found myself more at ease.

The noon hour came long before I expected it, and in the afternoon Henry, the two young ladies and myself left the house to ascend to the top of a high cliff that overlooked the beautiful country.

We sat on the top of the cliff and looked far away across the country to where the mountains rose higher and higher and the farthest of them resembled a cloud of blue smoke.

We could see the homes of the simple mountaineers and far down towards the west there ran the Clinch River, a beautiful mountain stream that wound itself in and out among the hills like a thread of silver among a world of cloud-smoked mountains.

We talked of the beautiful scenery, Miss Johnson pointing out to me the places most historic, and calling my attention to the grand scenery that lay to the east.

We could see the Paint Lick Mountains, and the House and Barn Mountains, and many other places of interest.

Miss Johnson explained to me that Paint Lick Mountain was so called because pictures of horses and deer and various other animals were pictured there by the Indians and that they could be distinctly seen to this day.

"I should like to visit those rocks," said I.

"Suppose we get Henry to take us," said Miss Johnson. "We have a cousin living near there and we can easily drive there in a day; we will spend the night with my cousin, visit the cliffs the next day and return home the day following."

Henry promised that we should go, and I sat like one in a trance wondering if it was really myself.

The evening was too soon gone and the sun was giving a golden tint to the mountain tops where we had been feasting our eyes, when we left the cliff.

The tall firs and pines were nodding and smiling a good night to each other when we reached the house. I walked back with Miss Johnson in silence, both happy and miserable. She too appeared to be thinking.

The horses were ready, and after bidding us good-by and requesting us to visit them, Miss Minnie Jones and I were left together in the twilight, which was stealing gently around us.

The whippoorwill's melancholy note fell upon my ear and far away down the valley I could hear the farmer calling his hogs and the low moaning of the cows as they gathered around the milk-maid.

The sun was set and the dew was falling; a star peeped out at me and I looked about and saw that I was alone; the moon rose slowly over the hill-tops and smiled at me; the nightingale, the sweet singer of the night, warbled forth its sweet notes and on its wings my thoughts flew back to my childhood's days at home.

I felt my mother's kiss and I heard my father's voice and my pet dog came and laid down at my feet, and I played as in my childhood by the babbling brook and lived again as in my early days, "running wild among the flowers."

CHAPTER VI.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH GEORGE PERKINS.

MY school opened up the following morning with very little change. I was well pleased with the interest some of my students were manifesting and especially George Perkins. I had begun to censure other teachers for not treating them fairly. I had believed that he meant what he said the first night that I met him. "Thar'll be no trouble, stranger, if yer treat us right," and I determined to do my part in this direction and I felt he was going to do his.

The week was almost gone and the only thing that had happened to break the quiet of the school was the flipping of acorns from some mischievous boy, or at least I supposed it to be a small boy, such as the country school only can furnish.

The most disagreeable part of it was, that the acorns were invariably thrown at me when my back was to the school. I could not catch the mischievous young rascal, although I tried hard to do so ; if I inquired, no one saw it and every one was very studious at that particular

time. I determined to catch the offender ; I placed a small mirror on the wall so arranged that I could see the greater part of the school with my back towards them. I had walked down the aisle and was returning, keeping my eye constantly on the glass. As I neared the wall, I saw George Perkins raise his hand and throw, not an acorn this time but a walnut. It was well aimed and struck me squarely in the back of the head. I turned around very quickly and every one was very busy with their books. I inquired who threw the walnut but no one knew. I told them that I knew who threw it and I would rather that they would frankly confess the truth and that they were too large to think of making false impressions upon people and especially their teacher.

"Who are you flinging that at ?" said George Perkins.

"I am not flinging it at any one," said I, "but I am talking to you, George ; you threw that walnut."

At this he jumped to his feet and strode half-way up the aisle toward me ; here he stopped and said : "I want yer ter understand that I've licked every teacher since I ken reckerlick, and if yer don't git down on yer knees ter me, I'll lick yer, I'll lick yer here and now."

An Encounter with George Perkins. 43

"There is but one to whom I kneel," said I, "and if you want to risk your reputation as a fighter before this school, wade in."

"Ye're a liar and a coward," shouted George, and with this he rushed at me; he struck, but I stepped aside and only felt the wind of his stroke as I caught him under the right jaw with my left and he went tumbling down in the corner; by this time Jim Peters, Jake Smith and two other boys, whose names, for the sake of their parents, I will not mention, were in the aisle ready for a fight. Jim came first; I stepped to the left and served him with my right, and he took possession of the opposite corner, while Jake and his two companions measured their lengths in the aisle. I was careful in selecting their places for them to fall, so that they would not crush any of the smaller children. I thought that while they were down it would be a good time to teach them a lesson that they had not yet learned. I had a good beech limb and I proceeded to inform George Perkins of it first and the others later, and by the time had I finished this it was my hour to bring the duties of a pedagogue to a close. I dismissed my school and went my way slowly back to Uncle Eli's. He had met some of the students on the road and they had told him

what had happened ; he ran down the hill like a schoolboy and met me, grabbed my hand, while tears rolled down his honest and time-wrinkled face. "Oh, Lampkins," he exclaimed, "I hearn all about it, I hearn all about it," still crying and shaking my hands, "you're my kind, you are, and I raised your salary, I did, before you got home."

"What's the matter, Uncle Eli?" I asked.

"Say, Lampkins, it beats the worl' the way that you did lay out 'em cuss-fired boys, and on this," he continued, "I am not taking the sacrament but straight drinks, same as I did when I won the snake victory over Samantha and the Circuit Rider."

Uncle Eli's joy amused me and I could see his "straight drinks" had something to do with it. He produced his "Black Betty" again, and after toasting all the great men that he could think of, the American Eagle and myself, he took one of his straight drinks and said, "I wish I could of been thar." I looked up the path and saw Mother Jones coming down towards us.

"Say, Lampkins," whispered Uncle Eli, "don't tell her I'm drinking, and after this I'll jest take the sacrament and nothing more."

An Encounter with George Perkins. 45

"Didn't I tell you so!" said Uncle Eli to his wife when she came up.

"What did you tell me, pap?" said Mrs. Jones in her kind way.

"Why now, blast my skin, didn't I tell you that he would fight like a cinnamon bear; this beats darnation, Lampkins, throwing insults in my face; yes, sir, I told her that you would lick 'em, and now you have, I have raised your salary and nobody can git that school but Lampkins, while Uncle Eli's head is kivered over with gray hair, and I want you to remember what I say too, Samantha."

Just as Uncle Eli was finishing up with his little speech Phil came down to where we stood.

"Here, Phil," shouted Uncle Eli, "this is the braves' man on the top side of yearth; yes, sir, he licked the whole school to-day and not a hair missin'."

"I told you," said Phil, "if he could fight like my ole Kurnel he could teach that school."

"Fight like the ole Kurnel," repeated Uncle Eli, "he can lick all the Kurnels in yer ridge-ment; didn't I tell yer that he was the blast-est fighter on the yearth."

"See here, Eli," said Phil, "we are powerful good friends but no man could lick my Kur-

nel and I can lick any man that thinks he can," and with that he struck at Uncle Eli, but missed him. Uncle Eli landed one square between Phil's eyes which sent Phil flat on his back into the mud-puddle, where the hogs had been wallowing.

"Holy Moses!" shouted Phil, squirting dirty water from his mouth and nose; "thunder-struck again."

"No," said Uncle Eli, "Elijah, God's chosen servant, was making a gesture and you acted the hog and wallowed in the mire."

I was laughing at them and even good Mother Jones had to give vent to a smile. Phil climbed out of the puddle, mud and water dripping from his clothing.

"Want some help?" asked Uncle Eli.

"No, none of your help, and if you can't fight like my Kurnel I'll lick yer fer this, by Harry I will."

"I can lick yer and lick yer ole Kurnel too," replied Uncle Eli, and I could see that his eyes glistened like fire and that he felt what he said.

"Can't do it," said Phil, "I kin whip any man on the top side of the yearth who throws off my Kurnel."

"Say, Phil," said Uncle Eli, "go to the

An Encounter with George Perkins. 47

house and get some clean clothes on ; you don't expect a gentleman to fight you in a filthy condition, do you ? ”

“ Yer don't want to fight me neither,” said Phil.

“ Yes, I do, I am just spoiling for a fight with you.”

“ Here, Samantha,” he continued, “give Phil my Sunday breeches and a clean shirt and we will go to the sink hole and fight to a finish ; he won't need no coat, I will warm him up, by thunder I will. No, sir, Lampkins,” he continued, “ we have never fit ter a finish, but we're more'n likely to do some good fitin' as we're mad this evening ; yes, sir, I am as mad as a man can git.”

“ Talk about a bull,” retorted Phil, “you are nothing but an old one-horned billy-goat.”

“ Come Uncle Eli,” I said, “ I thought you were going to take the sacrament on me.”

“ Can't take anything till I am through with Phil here.”

“ It is an infernal shame to have my ole Kurnel slandered and I won't stand it.”

“ You weren't standing a minute ago,” retorted Uncle Eli.

Mother Jones and I concluded that they had

quarreled enough, so we persuaded them to go with us.

"All right, mother," said Uncle Eli, "you're the best woman on the top side of the yearth and I'll do what you want me to do."

"And you nursed me back to life," said Phil, "when I was wounded fighting for my ole Kurnel. Gad! he was a fighter, weren't he, Eel?"

"I don't know nothing 'bout him," said Uncle Eli, "but ole Jackson licked him off the face of the yearth."

"Look out, Eel, or I'll——," said Phil, when Mother Jones broke in with,

"Come, I'm not going to have any more of this."

"All right, mother," said Uncle Eli and Phil together, and they walked up to the house with us. After Phil had changed his clothes they were like two brothers, and both expressed themselves well pleased with their day's work.

"Here, Lampkins," said Uncle Eli, "step out here, I want ter see yer a minit." When we were outside he continued. "Thar's a-gwine ter be trouble in this here neighborhood and you'll hafter do sum fightin' or else Uncle Eli's a fool."

"What will bring on the trouble?" I asked.

An Encounter with George Perkins. 49

"Why, 'em cuss-fired boys yer licked ter-day," said he; "you don't know 'em, Lampkins, the next time they tackle yer, they'll use their irons, and the best thing ter do is ter take a cupple er good guns, shoot the tops of their heads off, jest like killin' snakes, and I want ter say right here, Lampkins, Uncle Eli's with yer from hoof ter hide. Say, Lampkins," he continued, nodding towards the house, "Phil, in thar, is er trump. He'll stand by us, and with him we ken lick er ridgement of 'em."

"I hope there will be no fighting," I replied, "and if there is I will insist on you and Phil staying out of trouble."

"Don't say that, Lampkins," said Uncle Eli. Look," he continued with a wave of his hand, "I have licked er young bully almost on every five hundred acres yer can see, and now air yer a-goin' to refuse the request of an ole man and break my heart?" With tears rolling down his cheeks he went on: "I have prayed for a teacher that could lick George Perkins, and now yer done it, yer won't let me stand by yer."

I told him that if I needed him he should be in it, but at the present I must manage it alone. He went into the house and told

mother about my decision, and left me studying what was the best course to pursue. I stood thus for a time thinking, Miss Minnie Jones came out, and said to me, "Mr. Lampkins, I am so glad that you refused to let papa take any hand in this affair."

"I don't think that I will need any help," I replied.

"But you must prepare yourself for them; they are a cowardly and dangerous set and will not attack you openly. Change your route," she went on, "to the schoolhouse and do not travel the same one very often."

"But," said I, "if they attack me from ambush, what can I do? They could kill me before I was even aware of danger."

"They'll not do that," she replied. "They will attack you in squads of five or six, and attempt to compel you to throw up your hands, and tie and beat you unmercifully with withes."

"And what course do you suggest?" I asked.

"Go prepared," she answered, "and if they attack you, use your own judgment."

I knew what that judgment would be; I decided that some one would be hurt if they attacked me upon the highway. I felt by this

An Encounter with George Perkins. 51

time like my friend Phil's "Ole Kurnel," and that if it took fighting to teach out my school, I would do the best that I could for them. I went to bed that night and slept soundly. I awoke early and dressed and prepared myself for the duties of the day.

The "King of Day" was still melting the frost from the rails and roofs when I reached the schoolhouse. I had been inside but a few moments when Henry Johnson rode up. We exchanged greetings, and he asked me about the fight of the day before.

I told him as nearly as I could how it happened; he told me to be on my guard and take no chances, but to act at once if I was attacked; he asked me to spend that night with him, which I promised to do. He said that he would call for me that evening and rode away.

CHAPTER VII.

A NIGHT AT CAPTAIN JOHNSON'S.

THAT evening Henry came for me and we drove over to the Captain's. He met us down at the gate, and shook my hand heartily and said that he was glad to see me looking so well.

The Captain conducted me into the house where I was welcomed by Mrs. Johnson and her daughter. We had been in the house but a little while when Captain Johnson said to me: "Mr. Lampkins, I hear that you are succeeding splendidly with your school."

"Yes," I replied. "I am doing the best I can, and teaching in my own way."

I saw that he was disappointed, for this was not what he expected. He wanted me to tell him of the trouble that I had had with George Perkins and his gang.

"How are you and George Perkins getting along together?" he asked.

"He was not at school to-day," I answered.

"Mr. Lampkins," said he, "don't pretend to misunderstand me, for it did us all good to

hear that you had flogged those young rascals, and we want you to tell us all about it."

I did not want to mention this little fight before Miss Lucy, and his last remark embarrassed me, but I said to him, "Oh, it was nothing much, and would not interest you, and besides this I do not like to speak of unpleasant things in the presence of ladies."

"Oh," said Mrs. Johnson, "we will be glad to hear it."

"Yes; please tell us all about it," said Lucy.

I then recited as nearly as I could what had happened. When I had finished the Captain said to me, "Lampkins, you will have trouble with those boys and I want you to be prepared."

"I hardly anticipate any further trouble," I answered.

"Yes, but you do not know them," said he. "Before the week is out they will try to get even with you, and I want it understood that Captain Johnson is with you."

I thanked him and told him that I thought that I could manage them even if they did attack me.

"Lampkins," said the Captain, "come, I want to show you some of my fine saddle-horses,"

I arose and went with him ; he took my arm as we walked down the walk together.

"I will tell you," said he, "I do want to show you my horses, but I want to tell you something that perhaps you have not heard since you have been among us."

Then he abruptly asked me what I thought of Uncle Eli.

"I like the old gentleman," I replied.

"Yes ; he is a trump, and I never speak about what I am going to say before my family ; yes, he is the only man this side of the Blue Ridge that ever thrashed me, but if he were to whip a regiment he would never mention it."

"I thought that you and Uncle Eli were good friends, Captain."

"We are ; that was ten years ago, and we were friends the next day. But what I want to say is this, Lampkins ; depend on what Uncle Eli tells you, and be on your guard all the time for those boys, for they have more than once held up and tied a poor school teacher and whipped him until he was glad to leave the neighborhood, and they will try to do the same thing with you, unless I am very much mistaken ; they will be some time," he continued, "in arranging the place and time of attack ; it may be a week or it may not be that long, but

it will come ; they will either attack you going to or coming from school."

"I do not believe in fighting," I answered, "but if the worst comes I mean to defend myself."

"Certainly, defend yourself, and win either by fair means or by foul, and if it is necessary I am with you, Lampkins. I want you to teach out that school."

"Captain, I began to teach that school and I mean to do it ; I will admit that numbers are against me in this little matter, but I am going to stand my ground."

"Good !" he exclaimed, slapping me on the shoulder ; "and here, I want you to take this brace of pistols and if it comes to the worst use them." When he said this he held out to me a couple of blued steel Smith & Wessons.

"Captain, I am very much obliged to you, but I cannot take them ; I will not carry guns for the purpose of shooting boys that were once my school children."

"Lampkins, do act sensible about this, and don't throw yourself on their mercy."

"I am not doing that, Captain ; I am acting solely upon my own judgment, and if a scrap must come, I feel that I will be equal to the occasion without any fire-arms."

"So much like her," I heard the Captain mutter in a very low voice that he did not intend for me to hear, and the daring look on his face gave way to one of melancholy, and his piercing black eyes had a far-away look in them. The same expression and strange quiet demeanor took possession of him the first time that I had been to his house, when he spoke of my family and inquired about myself.

When the Captain had finished his melancholy thinking, he took me around to his stable to show me his horses. I think he was perfectly justifiable in the pride that he felt in the glossy chestnut sorrels, beautiful blacks and graceful grays with their long soft manes. He pointed each of them out by name and spoke of their fine qualities; he called my attention especially to a bright bay that he called "Lightfoot," and said that it was his daughter's. "He is the finest horse in my stable, and one among the fleetest; he suits Lucy exactly, and she loves him; she often brings little dainties here for him to eat and he shows his affection by neighing to her, and will follow her about the place. It is amusing to watch in how many little ways he manifests his appreciation of her kindness."

We returned to the house and in due course

of time supper was announced. I ate rather heartily, and after the meal was over we chatted about the beautiful scenery and the people and the Captain's horses, and went so far as to indulge in a little bit of innocent gossip, which is so dear to all female hearts and consoling to a goodly number of the opposite sex. Henry and Miss Lucy gave us some delightful music on a piano and violin, and in my sleep my soul swung out on the sweet strains that drifted far way towards the dreamland.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ATTACK.

THE morning did not resemble the other morning, the one on which I was dreaming when the Captain's voice bade me arise.

Instead of the sunshine the rain was pouring down and the water stood in ponds over the fields. Henry would not hear to my walking to school, but drove me over and set me down at the door dry and comfortable.

The day passed off quietly and no sign of an approaching storm from George Perkins and his comrades could be detected; the rain still continued to pour, and the continual dripping from the eaves of the house made a strange sweet music that I liked to hear, and soothed my burning soul. Like oil upon troubled waters, it drew my mind from the deep brown eyes, and radiant hair, and yet ever and anon I could see a smile that held for me a fascination that I cannot express.

Perhaps, dear reader, you have felt the same feeling and lived through the same burning

days with blazing hours and fiery minutes; when your young soul was on fire and your heart melted to honey dew under a smile, and at a word out of her saucy rosebud mouth it turned to ice, and a smile died in its infancy on your lips.

You remember when you would steal away in the twilight and compare her eyes to the stars, and her hair to a floss of gold dripping from the moon, and there sit and dream. You remember when love was first dawning upon your soul; a warm, sweet sensation, as it flashed through your being, at a look or a word or a touch of the gentle hand.

Go back to those early days when love was yet but a child, and when love's dream had not been ruffled, and you will have some idea of what I felt that day.

I sat in my humble little schoolhouse listening to the dripping of the rain from the eaves of the house, and watched the drops trickle from the branches of the trees.

I wended my way slowly back to Uncle Eli's when my day's work had been finished, and thus days softly glided by.

It had been nearly two weeks since the fight in the schoolhouse, and I was thinking that the young men had decided to let me earn an

honest living in peace. I had noticed that every morning and evening Henry Johnson, and sometimes his sister, would pass me on the way to or from school. This was Friday morning. I was light-hearted and happy. My school was progressing nicely and the children had become attached to me, and I was growing fonder of them. I liked the little peculiarities that each one of them possessed, that made them entirely different from all the others. I was thinking of what true, manly spirits the most of them possessed, when the click of a gun and the words "Halt, d—n you!" fell upon my ears. I looked in the direction of the command and I saw, running down the hill towards me, George Perkins and his four companions, all armed with mountain rifles, shot-guns or pistols. I saw clearly their intention, as one of them carried a cord and a bundle of withes under his arm. I sprang nimbly over the bank of the road; as I did so I saw George Perkins' gun leveled upon me and two shots rang out almost simultaneously, but I heard some one say: "My God, boys, I am shot."

"Throw up your hands, or there will be more of you shot," and I recognized Henry Johnson's voice.

I sprang upon the bank just opposite Henry;

as I did so they fired at us; a bullet grazed my cheek. I snatched a revolver from Henry's hands, raised it and fired and Jim Peters fell beside George Perkins; the three others ran for the cover of a large poplar log that lay a few yards away. We knew that we were at a disadvantage as we stood in full view, and that it would only be a short time until our bodies would be riddled with bullets if we remained where we now were. I leaped over the bank and called to Henry to follow me. We took cover under a large log that served as part of the road bank. We were compelled to lay quite close to the ground, so as not to expose our persons to the enemy.

Henry, at every few minutes, carefully raised his head to see if he could get a shot at any of them. I begged him not to expose himself, and if possible to avoid any other bloodshed.

"They are not very anxious for any further bloodshed," said Henry, "unless it is ours."

He raised his hat on a stick, about a foot above the top of the log, under which we lay and three shots quickly rang out, and three holes were punctured in his hat.

"Now," said Henry, "watch when I raise it again and see if you can get a shot."

My blood was up, but I was very careful not

to get my head any farther up than was absolutely necessary. Henry raised the hat and I saw a leg move at the end of the log behind which our enemies were fortified. I took a snap-shot at it, and instead of three shots four were heard. Three more holes were in the hat and one in Jake Smith's leg; he screamed like a panther and jumped to his feet, but only remained an instant. I knew that I had wounded him, but just how badly I could not tell.

"Getting them pretty well down to our own number," said Henry.

"Yes," I replied.

We lay thus for more than two hours, each party waiting for an opportunity to annihilate the other.

The situation was becoming extremely unpleasant, when we heard Uncle Eli say, "Throw up your hands or I will blow the hull top of yer danged heads off."

We jumped to our feet and looked up the hill about thirty yards above the log, and saw Uncle Eli and my old friend Phil both looking over the sights of double-barreled shot-guns. The boys took in the situation and threw up their hands.

"Here, Lampkins," called out Uncle Eli, "have yer got er rope?"

"They have," I replied, "snatching up the rope that Jim Peters had dropped when I shot him. I went up to them and tied their hands, and found that I had only wounded Jake Smith slightly in the leg. When I had finished, Uncle Eli inquired what had become of Perkins. I pointed to where George Perkins and Jim Peters lay.

"By Gad," exclaimed Phil, "he fights more like my ole Kurnel than anybody on the top side of the yearth."

"Didn't I tell yer?" said Uncle Eli. "I knowed it from the cut of his eye; blast my hide, Phil, if we can't take Lampkins and Henry and thrash the whole neighborhood, and I believe that we will do it."

I went down to where George Perkins and Jim Peters lay; I felt their pulses and examined their wounds. I found that they were alive but very weak from the loss of blood.

Henry jumped into his saddle and dashed away after the doctor about four miles distant.

"Let 'em die," said Uncle Eli, "let 'em die; the sooner the better."

"Jest like my ole Kurnel," said Phil, "can't bear to see a man suffering." I paid no attention to their remarks; I emptied the little

bucket in which I carried my dinner to school, and brought some water from the spring near by. I held it first to George's lips and then to Jim's. I washed their faces and tore my handkerchief in two and laid it on their wounds, which I kept thoroughly wet with water. They were conscious, but would not speak to me and did not even look at me.

"I jist thought," said Uncle Eli, "that there was something in the air, so we came over this er way."

"Mighty glad we come," said Phil.

"Yes," said Uncle Eli, "and here and now I don't take the sacrament, but a straight drink, the same as I did when I outgineraled Samantha and the Circuit Rider, and the same when Lampkins had his first fight," and with this he took his flask from his coat pocket, took a drink, smacked his lips and muttered: "Best thing on top side of yearth."

"Try one, Phil," and Phil did so.

"What a pity," said Phil, "wanted to try my hand again; blamed if I don't feel jist like my old Kurnel was here giving orders."

"If it weren't for my belonging to the church, I don't think that they would have surrendered; no, I'll tell yer the truth, Phil," continued Uncle Eli in a lower tone, "it was not that

that kept me from shooting 'em; it was my promise to mother; I could git over my religion, the Lord mought forgive a man, but a woman never.

"Yes, I promised Samantha, if there was any way out uv it never ter hurt a man agin, and I mean to keep my word, but had them chaps showed fight, this would uv been the happiest moment uv my life."

The doctor came dashing up and soon examined the wounded boys. I looked on with bated breath and fervently prayed that they might recover, not that my conscience did not approve of the course that I was forced to pursue, but I thought of their mothers and their aged fathers, and I knew the grief that it would bring them, as well as to my own dear mother's heart; I knew that it would wound my mother very deeply to know that, even in self-defense, I had been forced to take that which none but God could give; I thought, too, of my little sister, who, when I was returning from the school or the field, ran down to the branch and met me and threw her little chubby arms around my neck, and covered my face with kisses,

"In a few moments after the doctor arrived Henry and the Captain came up, and behind

them followed a light spring wagon, bedded with bright clean straw. Henry had prepared to have George and Jim sent home. While the doctor was dressing their wounds and making other little necessary arrangements for this purpose, Captain Johnson said to me, "Lampkins, I would like to speak to you."

"All right," I replied, and we moved away from those around us.

"It is this, Mr. Lampkins, What course do you intend to pursue with the prisoners that you have?"

"For the present," I replied, "they must be secured in the county jail, and I will decide later on what course I will pursue."

"That is what I would suggest, and before you go any farther towards prosecuting them, I would like to suggest some things to you that might prove beneficial in this case, Mr. Lampkins."

I thanked him and promised that he should have an opportunity to go over the matter with me.

I assisted in placing George and Jim in the wagon as comfortably as possible. Phil had taken possession of the prisoners and declared that he would march them to jail by himself. Uncle Eli wanted to go with him but Phil

swore that he would put them safely behind the bars before one o'clock, if he had to fight like his "Ole Kurnel" to do it. I felt confident that he could do it, and at my suggestion he marched them away with a shot-gun on his shoulder, and a revolver dangling at each side.

When I reached the schoolhouse I was somewhat tardy, and the children, bareheaded, were running and playing in the yard; a part of them were preparing their lessons, while others were laughing and talking; all were in a good humor, from the little girls with black, brown, and golden curls to the red-headed and freckle-faced boy who sat to my right. School went on as usual, the noon hour came, and the evening sped away on minute wings and I strolled back to my home, the old dog met me with a friendly yelp. Lucy Johnson rode up and I assisted her to alight and walked up to the house with her; opened the door and surprised Uncle Eli in a solemn act of taking the sacrament.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DANCE AT CAPTAIN JOHNSON'S.

CHRISTMAS morning came, and with it the prisoners, whom Phil had marched to jail, found themselves free. I had resolved not to prosecute them, and with the influence of Captain Johnson, I had succeeded in getting the authorities to concur with me in this view. George Perkins and Jim Peters were yet under the care of the physician, and would probably be for several weeks to come, but they were not forgotten.

A box of the nicest candy, the nicest that Petersville, the county seat, could afford, was sent to each of them. Uncle Eli and my good friend Phil seriously disapproved of the policy that I was pursuing with my enemies, but Mother Jones and Miss Minnie were on my side, and with their influence I was soon enabled to install myself again into their good graces.

Henry Johnson and his sister, together with a few of Miss Minnie's warmest friends, were

The Dance at Captain Johnson's. 69

invited to take dinner at Uncle Eli's that day. Mother Jones and Miss Minnie were busily engaged in preparing the good things to be served for dinner. Uncle Eli and Phil were playing seven-up and taking two drinks to every game, but they never so far forgot themselves as not to keep a close watch on the door for Mother Jones, who, unfortunately, opened the door at the moment Phil had placed the bottle to his lips with head tilted back. Between the desire to get the drinks and to keep Mother Jones from seeing him, and to hide the cards, he made a grab at the cards, sent them flying in every direction, strangled himself on the whisky and dropped the bottle and broke it.

"Thunderation, Phil," exclaimed Uncle Eli, "broke the bottle, at the first drink ; mighty glad," he continued, "that I saved enough in this glass to take the sacrament."

"Pap," said Mother Jones, "I don't want you to get tight to-day."

"I'm not goin' ter, mother."

"I think that yer er very near tight now."

"By gad, Lampkins," said Uncle Eli, "did you hear that? Can't I take the sacrament on Christmas Day, when we all should remember the Lord, without getting drunk?"

The guests had begun to arrive, and Uncle

Eli and Phil arose to put away the horses. This was the last that we saw of them until late that evening, when I heard Phil swearing like a sailor about his "Ole Kurnel"; they walked up arm-in-arm, both as drunk as lords and feeling ten times richer.

I put them to bed while Uncle Eli was telling me how dearly he loved his Saviour, and that everybody ought to take the sacrament; Phil was obeying the orders of his "Ole Kurnel" and fighting the battle of Gettysburg.

The next morning Uncle Eli came to me and wanted me to say to Mother Jones that he would never take anything again, except a toddy before breakfast, and Phil was swearing to her at the same time that he would never play cards any more for the drinks.

The day wore away and in the evening the snow was coming down softly. We made ourselves ready for the party at Captain Johnson's that evening. I pictured to myself the pleasure of the evening and in it I could see graceful couples gliding smoothly over the polished floors and keeping step to the music, but my jealousy would assert itself when I tried to fancy Lucy Johnson with a handsome young man gliding gracefully over the floor to the soft sweet strains of the violin. I knew that this would be a grand

The Dance at Captain Johnson's. 71

affair, for Captain Johnson did not do anything in a half-hearted manner. I was also aware there was not a man or woman in the County who did not consider themselves highly honored to be the guests of Captain Johnson.

We were among the first to arrive, but we had not been relieved of our wraps but a short time until the gay revelers came from all parts of the country and from Petersville, bringing with them the string band of which the town was wont to boast.

There were present lawyers, physicians, the County representative, Judge Fulton's daughter, whose father was a noted lawyer in the western part of the State, and many well-to-do farmers' sons and daughters.

They were all dressed nicely and appeared joyous and happy. I was not embarrassed, as you would naturally suppose, but on the contrary I admired the beautiful young ladies and their handsome and well-dressed beaux.

"Partners fur the fust set," called out the old darkey, who was destined to call the figures, and who, I soon learned, was accustomed to this kind of work for two or three months out of the year.

Ten couples were soon on the floor, measuring time to the vibration of the Petersville

string band that was playing the Mississippi Sawyer, with might and main.

"Swing your partners," cried Uncle Tom, and Miss Lucy was swung gracefully around by a man whom I thought I had seen before. Presently his face was turned towards me and I recognized in him, Mr. Painter, the man to whom I sold my hog. At the same time Miss Lucy smiled at me, and in that smile I thought that I had discovered the secret of her heart; she was in love with Painter, and my own heart sank deep down in the dark land of despair.

Captain Johnson came over and sat down by me and pointed out the different couples to me.

I had met them but I could not remember all their names. As the names of the young gentlemen were mentioned, he spoke of their different occupations and business qualifications and the success that each was making. He remained longer in an explanation of Mr. Painter than of the others, saying that he was a very shrewd trader and that he had made two thousand dollars during the past year speculating in hogs, and that he was quite a favorite among the young ladies of the neighborhood.

"Yes, sir, any young lady in this county

The Dance at Captain Johnson's. 73

would jump at the chance of getting him for a husband."

"Do they admire him for what he is or for what he has?" I asked.

"Both, I suppose, as young ladies must look out for their own interest in marrying."

"Exactly," said I, "but their interest does not necessarily lie where the most money is held out to them."

"Oh, the time has come, Mr. Lampkins," said he, "when young ladies must marry husbands with money, and not let a love sentiment or a foolish imagination lead them to a poverty-stricken home."

"I do not agree with you; young ladies of any nerve of a true woman will consult her truest love and the dictates of her own heart, and choose happiness and love before riches without it; call this foolish imagination or what you will, it is true."

He looked away from me and sighed, but did not answer; he was meditating again; his gloomy spell had struck him.

The music was soft and sweet and the dance went on, and I studied his face, and in it I thought that I could detect traces of disappointment.

I speculated as to what it could be that af-

flicted him in this manner when I was with him.

The first set was finished and the couples were scattered here and there, and engagements were being made for the next set. Miss Lucy came over to where her father and I sat and spoke to her father about something in regard to the comfort of the guests; she took the seat that I offered her and chatted pleasantly.

I did not make any engagement for that set, but asked Miss Lucy for that honor in the set following.

Mr. Painter came over and asked Lucy to dance that set with him.

"I will rest this set, thank you, Mr. Painter," she answered.

"Have you an engagement for the next set?"

"Yes," she answered, "with Mr. Lampkins."

He bowed politely, looked daggers at me and turned away, and in that look I saw a reproduction of the same that he wore in my dream, when he bore the Captain's daughter away in his arms, while I was being crushed beneath her father's wrath.

Painter sought Miss Fulton and made an engagement for three sets ahead, and whirled away in the dance.

The Dance at Captain Johnson's. 75

I felt like a conqueror, with one side of my heart bursting with love, for she who stood beside me and the other rent in twain with hatred for he who dared to disturb by look or smile my tranquil joy and happiness.

Who is so happy as a young man sitting beside his first love with its golden dreams and brilliant fancies ; clasp her hand gently in yours, and all the sweet thoughts of Heaven, and the purest, gentlest sensations of earth fill your soul, and you dream of the possibilities of life as never before. You look forward to that blissful day when you shall stand around the sacred altar and take the solemn vow, not to be broken until death ; you can hear the low sweet voice of some one else, as she lays her lily and trusting hand in yours, and you drift down the golden age of life together, until you shall have reached the cataract of life and death, and even then you do not, cannot, separate, but the one gone on before presses the golden sands around the throne of God and touches the silver chords of an angel's lyre, and its music floats down and draws the love cords stronger, firmer yet, around the one left behind, and your souls will meet and talk and perhaps hold sweet communion with other spirits.

CHAPTER X.

“ HERE’S TO YOU, PHIL.”

WE sat and talked pleasantly over things that were very interesting to us, but no doubt dull to those around us, had they not been too busily engaged themselves to pay very close attention to what others were doing.

The set was soon finished, and partners for the next set called.

I whirled away with Miss Lucy in the dance and my thoughts were lost in it. I danced better that night than I ever did in my life. This was the only accomplishment that those with whom I had grown up, admired in me. Almost the first thing that I can remember was my dancing to the notes of my brother’s fiddle ; when I was six years old I could dance anything from the Arkansas Traveler to the Highland Fling. I was exquisitely happy and felt that I was paid for all the cuffs that I had been subjected to since my early childhood. I danced that set and the next and the next and all that followed. My heart beat with rapid strokes under the warm sensation of love that

cannot be described, and my soul thrilled with peace and joy and passionate happiness, as the beautiful damsel beside me touched my hand or smiled upon me, through those large, clear brown eyes.

I had thought her beautiful when I first met her, footsore, tired and worn as I was; I thought her lovely when I sat beside her on the cliff that beautiful dreamy Sunday afternoon and as we viewed the landscape over together. I thought her divine when she came and sat down with the Captain and myself and talked of happiness in a voice sweet to hear, but now I thought of more than all these, with the rose-bloom upon her cheeks and her velvet hair hanging like golden floss, and with her soul in her eyes, as tender and pure as the sweetest thoughts of heaven. Her eyes were as clear as diamonds, hedged about with emeralds and shaded in costly hues. Her figure that of a goddess and her dancing like a nymph's, on whose feet were silver sandals inlaid with pearl and tied with zephyr breezes. Her dress, though simple, as it had been dipped in the milky way where the star dust was brightest, and her laugh was light like nebulae from the skies and her breath was sweet unto intoxication.

When the dance was over and I took my leave, I bent over her hand and kissed it ; my soul leaped out on velvet breezes and rode away to its own world of dream-thought, and reveled there, while I rode back to Uncle Eli's just as the cock crew, announcing the coming dawn. I opened the door ; as I did so, Uncle Eli raised a cup to his lips and said, " Here's to you, Phil. "

CHAPTER XI.

GEORGE PAINTER'S DEFEAT.

THE holidays that followed were filled with parties, dances and socials, given at the homes of the people present at the dance at Captain Johnson's. I was invited to a part of them, to others I was not, and every one that I attended, George Painter was also there. He invariably wanted to make engagements with Miss Lucy for the entire evening and I was equally anxious to prevent him, although not until the last dance I attended, did I attempt to make engagements very far in advance, but on New Year's evening at Judge Fulton's, with all the aristocracy of Petersville looking on, George Painter and I both found ourselves at the same time in the presence of Miss Johnson, both asking for the first set almost at the same time ; George Painter saying so with his lips, and I was saying more with my eyes. I waited to hear her answer. I expected defeat but did not allow myself to admit it, for within there was two ruling passions : one was a burn-

ing fire of love for Miss Lucy and the other a glowing coal of hatred for the hog speculator, not because we were both suitors for the same hand, but because he had treated me upon every occasion with such marked contempt that I heard it commented upon by a great many of the guests during the dances, and as many times did I feel rising up within me the mad desire to mash his handsome insolent mouth, but fearing that I would lose favor with her whom I desired to please I sacrificed the pleasure with the hope of being rewarded with her smile.

"Partners to their places," called out the old darkey.

"Come," said Painter walking up to her and offering his arm, and I thought that I had lost.

"No, I thank you," she replied, and without further explanation she took my arm and we glided across the floor into the thickest of the dance, and left George Painter furiously gritting his teeth in anger like a spirited horse, but as sullen as an ass on a frosty morning.

I could see that amazement and surprise were intermingled on every face; they had been accustomed to seeing every opponent fall before the smooth tongue of George Painter, and every young lady within the limits of

Petersville sought at every opportunity his honeyed words, and not only this but gossip had long since settled the destiny of the young and prosperous hog speculator and lovely, Lucy Johnson's as one and the same.

Amazement therefore soon gave way to other passions; some were glad because he had in the past toyed with their affections and it was sweet to see his defeat. Others had hopes that he would return to them and declare that he always loved them and would love them still. The young men were glad because it piqued his pride and wounded his vanity; others were glad because he was defeated once in life before their very eyes, but I was happy, not because he was defeated but because I had won, and in winning I had shown a peacock his egotism, when his long and brilliant tail feathers were spread.

I was Miss Johnson's partner in each set of the dance, while Painter turned his attention in a reckless manner to the haughty beauty, Miss Fulton; he appeared gayer and careless with his sparkling wit, but it had a tinge of bitterness, on his face was written revenge, and his eyes spoke hatred when they met mine.

I did not fear him but when he looked at me in his cold sneering way I did not altogether feel

at ease. I remembered hearing Uncle Eli say he was desperate when angry and that he had been known to horsewhip those who had dared to oppose his schemes, whether they were right or wrong, but I felt that if he tried to humiliate me in this matter, he would have more serious news to relate to his friends than he had had before.

When the cock, the messenger of the coming dawn, warned with his shrill voice, the midnight revelers that another day was bursting the chains of night, pale maidens and tired young men were not yet nestled snug and warm in their couches. Each of their hearts was beating with new-born joy or struggling with new difficulties that were the offspring of the night.

Before I took my leave Miss Lucy called me to one side and said, "Mr. Lampkins, I have a request to make of you."

"I will gladly listen," I replied.

"It is this ; please don't you and Mr. Painter have any trouble ; promise me this ; please, won't you ? "

She was looking at me with her burning eyes, with her sweet face upturned to me, and her voice slightly trembling. I could hear her heart beat with suspense, as she stood with

her hands clasped as if in prayer. I felt as if I could take her in my arms, crush her to my bosom, and call her my own, not only promising to defend but I would defy gods and devils to take her from me.

"Won't you please promise?" she repeated.

"I promise," said I. "Good-by."

Henry Johnson and myself went to Petersville's Inn and slept in a cold bed in a cold room until the sun was well near the midday mark; we arose and partook of the meal furnished us by our hospitable host. We ordered our rigs and Henry drove around for Miss Minnie Jones, while I went for his sister, both of them preferring to stay with their friends in preference to the Inn.

Henry had scarcely turned the corner when I stepped out of the Inn into the street where my rig was waiting me.

George Painter stepped in front of me and carelessly brushed my hat from my head, and with an insolent air spit upon me.

My blood was boiling in my veins, and I drew back to strike him when "Won't you promise, please?" rang in my ears, and with one mighty effort I caught the stroke, muffled my anger, picked up my hat and drove away, while

he and his companions hissed and sneered at me.

As we drove back to Captain Johnson's I told Miss Lucy of my love and how I adored her. I poured out my soul to her and begged her to tell me whether I might some time hope to win her when I was able to give her a home.

"If I find that you love me, I will promise all that you ask," she answered, "but I do not expect daring deeds and perilous feats to test your devotion ; true manliness," she continued, "such as you have always shown in my presence, will win true hearts quicker than all the heroic deeds upon record."

We then talked of those things that are dear to newly found hearts beating in unison, but would not interest those who might read this narrative. I did not tell her of the insult that I had received at the hands of Painter, as I did not want her to have the least anxiety in this direction.

We arrived at Captain Johnson's at three P. M., and I noticed that Miss Jones was blushing like a new-blown rose, when Henry assisted her to alight and walked up the walk beside her.

When dinner was served and I took my leave, Henry walked part of the distance with me, and he told me that he was the accepted lover

of Miss Minnie and that he was the happiest man alive. I congratulated him, but I did not tell him what had taken place in the buggy in front, as we drove home from Petersville.

"Lampkins," said Henry, "you are the only one that will know this for some time, as Miss Minnie would not agree to let me mention this to Uncle Eli at present.

"I do not know what is her reason for it, but I am anxious to wait because she wants me to!"

"Are you going to finish your course?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he answered. "I only lack two months and then I am going to open up my office in town, and you shall study with me and board with us. Lampkins, I must return," continued Henry, "and take Minnie home; I am a slave you see, but she is the sweetest master on earth."

"I am glad that you are so happy, Henry, and I trust that your happiness will grow, as the years go by."

"Yes, Lampkins, I have thought for a long time, but not until to-day did I know that she really cared for me. Now I have something to live for that will inspire me to greater efforts in life."

Here he held out his hand to me and said "Good-by, Lampkins ; if you ever need a friend call on me," and he turned and walked back towards his home while I, light-hearted and happy, turned myself in the opposite direction.

I found Uncle Eli at home, reading his Bible and talking religion with Mother Jones, who was as much pleased to see me as my own mother could have been, and asked how I had enjoyed the dance, and inquired something about Miss Minnie.

Phil came in and shook my hand and swore that I looked more like his "ole Kurnel" every day that I lived.

"Yes, sir," he continued, "Eel, he acts like him too. Did you hear about him jest er knocken the socks off that hog speculator?"

"What? George Painter?"

"Yes, took the Captain's darter away from him and all Petersville sassiety er lookin' on."

"And why shouldn't he, Phil ; by gad, that's the best girl in this neighborhood."

"Yes, and Lampkins is jest like my ole Kurnel ; the best fighter in this here neighborhood and I am standin' with him."

"By gad, Phil, ain't I tole yer more'n once

that he could whip all the kurnels in yer ridge-ment; blast my hide if he can't."

"Look out, Eel, thar's nary a h—l if I'll have my Kurnel thrown off on, and kin lick any——"

"Hold on, Phil, I've been er talking religion with Samantha ter-day and haven't taken the sacrament but once, but d——n my hide, if I had you and the ole Kurnel in the sink hole I could lick yer both."

"Yer kin get me thar mighty quick," said Phil.

Both sprung to their feet and started; as Uncle Eli passed the old chest his flask setting on the top disappeared, and as Phil closed the door I heard him say, "The ace of spades is gone out of this deck, Eel."

CHAPTER XII.

A VISIT TO THE PERKINS HOMESTEAD.

MY school had opened up nicely after the holidays, and I was both happy and pleased. The students were fresh and vigorous and I had never seen so much interest manifested in tattered schoolbooks. Their faces were growing very dear to me, and I tried to share and lighten their school-day troubles, for I had so recently left the log schoolhouse as a student that I was standing with one foot upon the same rough place and on the same cruel stones that were daily bruising their heels.

No one can tell how dear a little mischievous boy, with a freckle face and a sunburnt nose, can become to him, unless he shares his troubles or participates in his childish joys in everyday life in a log cabin called the country schoolhouse.

At night when you fall asleep every freckle that is on his face is stamped upon your memory and his mischievous words tickle your imagination in your dreams.

A Visit to the Perkins Homestead. 89

The little girl that came too with upturned face, while tears were dancing on the very verge of her innocent blue eyes, and tells you of her little trouble with her playmates; before she is finished the playmate comes up and you take one upon each knee and put your arms gently around them, and soon the briny tears cease to flow and sunny smiles play upon their faces; they swing down together and hand in hand run away to play, forgetting their sorrow in their sweet childish innocence, and you learn to love them with a feeling akin to that of a parent. Thus your school life is a reality by day and a dream by night.

I was thoroughly interested in my school work, light-hearted and happy, because I knew that Lucy Johnson loved me; I felt that every one envied me and that I was the most fortunate man on earth, and yet I knew that I could not give her a home, such as she had.

I resolved to study harder than I ever had before; I burned the midnight oil that I might be able to stand the examination which was to be held in June following, and at which time Henry would apply for his license. I rode over to Petersville once a week and Judge Fulton kindly gave me an examination along the line that he had mapped out for me.

When I had finished one book he gave me another, which I carried home with me, and in this way I delved into the knotty problems of Blackstone, Greenleaf and Chitty, and such other text-books as my good friend would suggest.

During this time I had thought over the situation of George Perkins and Jim Peters, and I determined that they should not be prosecuted any further if I could prevent it.

Miss Lucy and I were out riding, and in passing by where George and Jim were propped up in their chairs, I suggested that we stop to see them.

I saw that she was very much surprised, but readily consented to do so.

We found them thin and pale, and I felt like I had come pretty close to committing the crime which had always held for me the greatest horror. I felt like going down on my knees and begging their pardon. We shook hands with them ; also with Mr. and Mrs. Perkins. His mother gave us seats and looked at me with her deep pale eyes that showed suffering and unrest. My heart was bleeding for that pale, thin mother, who looked so weak and thin that her heart-beats appeared strong enough to split her breast. George looked at me in a

A Visit to the Perkins Homestead. 91

pleading way that I could not resist, when he held out his thin, pale hand to me, as white as a girl's and said, "Mr. Lampkins, I want you to forgive us the wrong that we have done you. I cannot ask you not to prosecute us for we meant to kill you."

"No, George, I am not going to prosecute you. I stopped to see you and to tell you that you will not be prosecuted, and all that I ask of you and Jim is to come back to school and be men in the future."

Jim and George thanked me and I could see the tears glistening in George's eyes. Mrs. Perkins was quietly sobbing, and the tears rolled down the time-wrinkled face of George's father and his thin white hair shook from emotion. That moment was the happiest of my life : those who have never tried it, do not know the true happiness that there is in forgiving one who has injured you. There is a peace and quiet joy about it that only those who speak from experience can tell.

When we took our leave George insisted that we should come to see them often, saying that he felt better than he had since he had been sick. His mother begged us to promise to take dinner with them on the following Saturday which was cheerfully given. I felt like I was a

better creature when I left, and as I walked down to the gate I knew that there was more happiness in the world than there had been before I set foot in that little trodden path that led to where George and Jim were waving us good-by.

As we rode back Lucy said to me: "Mr. Lampkins, I am so glad that you forgave those boys that I feel like crying. I love you better than ever I did."

"I deserve no credit for doing what is right," I replied, "but I am glad that I did it."

"Mr. Lampkins, there is not another man in this country who would act as you did. I think that it was so good in you to make those people so happy.

"I had determined to pursue this course some time ago," I said. "I am happy since the drive from town and I cannot think of other people suffering if I can prevent it."

"And I am so happy, so proud that you have that true manly spirit of forgiveness and gentleness. I love the gentle and not the boisterous, for in them you find pure hearts and souls."

I rode home with Miss Lucy and took supper with them that evening. I thought that I could detect in the Captain a change, and he was not as friendly as usual. His melancholy spells

A Visit to the Perkins Homestead. 93

came on more frequently when I was with him of late than when I first met him. I could notice him studying my face carefully when he thought that I did not see him, and in some way each time it reminded me of my dream the first night that I met the Captain and his beautiful daughter, and how his angry black eyes shot forked darts of hatred at me.

Where we sat we could hear the soft sweet strains of the violin as Henry's soft fingers delicately touched the strings, while Lucy and I talked of the future, as though God had promised long lives and happy days. The hands of my watch registered ten when I arose to go.

I begged a kiss which, with blushing sweetness, was granted. When my lips touched the rosebud mouth in its juicy sweetness, my soul and thought was transplanted beyond the range of mortals, and stars rolled back from their paths; the moon threw around it a wreath of golden kisses, of pure sunlight and it bathed itself in a pool of the pure honey dew, and returned spotless and innocent. I rode back to Uncle Eli's and found he and Phil in a hot discussion; before I reached the gate I could hear them, and I soon learned that it was about myself.

"Well! well! let it all go," said Uncle Eli,

"if Lampkins don't want to prosecute them it is all right."

"He's jest like my ole Kurnel," said Phil, "can't stay mad at a man."

I entered the door while Uncle Eli was still smacking his lips, which he always did after taking a drink.

I greeted them kindly, said good night and went to bed a happy man.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WILL.

I SLEPT that night with a peaceful breast and dreamed of the happy and the good, and awoke in the morning to the twittering song of the first spring bird perched on a limb near my window, and the crab-apple blossom, the sweetest bloom on earth, with its soft, rich fragrance, filled my room with air laden with its odor. The dewdrops hung in crystals from the limbs, and the sun's rays were shining through them, and they resembled diamonds hung from the sweet southern magnolia tree. The birds were holding a gay concert in the shade trees at the spring and the grass was fresh and sweet as the tender heart of a maiden unsullied by sin and purified by love.

I did not move but lay as I was and looked and listened.

I realized God in the bird's song: I heard His praise sung in the soft tender grass; felt Him in the fragrant air and saw Him in them all.

As I lay the scene of yesterday at the Perkins homestead returned to me, and I remembered how the sad look on their faces gave way to pleasant surprise, mingled with joy, when I told them that I did not come on a revengeful mission, but one of mercy.

Mrs. Perkins' face, though thin and sadder, strangely reminded me of my own mother's, and the spot upon my cheeks, where her tears fell when I left home, was damp from my own.

No heart is so tender as when saturated with love and filled with pity, mercy and forgiveness. Forgive an injury and the humiliation is sweeter than any other revenge could be, though your victim were hung between the earth and the skies.

You thus fill your own cup of bitterness to overflowing that would stain your soul and gnaw your vital strings of happiness.

Forgive him and there is no heart so mean, and no soul so degraded that has not a tender chord that cannot thus be reached, and perhaps he will shed a tear so pure that sainted hands will stoop down and catch it, bear it away and transplant it into the river of life, where angels in their beauty can bathe their snowy pinions and leave them brilliant as crimson gold.

I arose and dressed, ate my breakfast and

set out for school earlier than usual, so that I might revel in sweet day-dreams and enjoy the balmy breezes of the morning, as I thought of love and of Lucy.

I went down by the spring and watched the fish gambol in the brook by the cliff where I had sat with her that Sunday afternoon, and enjoyed the pleasant hours that flew quickly by.

I smiled at the towering mass of gray limestone with its mossy sides and thought of it as a thing of life. I plucked from its brink a green mossy sprig, and tied it with a thread of silken floss, and placed it in my day-book where my mother had written "Remember, my son, words fitly spoken, are like apples of gold and pictures of silver."

I loved those cliffs, not only because I once rested upon their peaks beside her whom I loved, but they also reminded me of those that I climbed in my childhood days around my mountain home, and plucked violets and honeysuckles for the flowers, and sweet williams for their juicy bulbs.

I walked on by the rickety old mill, through the woodland and across the fields to the schoolhouse, where the birds in the tree-tops above were blending their voices with the

merry school children in the yard below, as they shouted and laughed and sang in childhood blessedness. Every chord was touched and every string of my soul (for souls are but the harps upon which angels play) vibrated the sweet music that they made.

Saturday came, a perfect day and breezy; now and then a small white cloud, like a flower, floated gracefully in the blue sky and the atmosphere was warm and tender.

I mounted the nice young steed that Uncle Eli had delegated to my service and rode away towards the homestead of Captain Johnson. Lucy and I rode over to Mr. Perkins' and found George and Jim very much improved, and our host and hostess looked happier than they did at our previous visit.

Mrs. Perkins met us with a kind sad smile, but I could see her heart was lighter than usual. We talked pleasantly with Jim and George and the day wore on rapidly. We enjoyed a good, wholesome dinner, and in the afternoon Mr. Perkins took me out to see some fine specimens of silver ore which he had collected, but in reality they were nothing but limestone crystals.

We came back by the spring that flowed out with great buoyancy over the white pebbles at

the bottom and drank from the gurgling fountain the cooling drops. Mrs. Perkins came for a bucket of water and began talking with us.

"Mr. Lampkins," she said, "I once knew your mother when we were girls."

"I am happy to meet an old acquaintance of hers," I answered, somewhat surprised.

"Yes, we were girls together, and cousins and dear good friends, but I became angry with her one day over our sweethearts and we have never seen each other since. I have often tried to find her address but I never knew where she lived until I learned from George where you were from, and I knew that you were my cousin, and your mother was my playmate."

I was very much astonished, for I had never known my mother to have trouble with any one.

"I will write to mother and tell her that you are here."

"Do," said she, "for it was all my fault, and tell her that I want her to forgive me."

I promised to do so, and she continued, "We were the warmest friends until we had a dispute over your father and Captain Johnson."

"Captain Johnson," I repeated.

"Yes, he was your mother's most ardent admirer and every one thought they would marry until she met your father."

Here she stopped abruptly and turned to go away when I begged her to tell me more about it.

"It is not a very long history," she said. "and you have been so kind to us, I will tell you all that I know about it. Your mother was a beautiful girl, with light wavy hair like yours, and was loved by every one because she was so gentle and good. Captain Johnson was a young, handsome and well-to-do farmer, and loved your mother as only a few women are loved; she was kind to him, but did not encourage him in his suit; when she spoke of him, it was fashioned like a sister speaking of her brother; no one knew or understood why she did not fall rapidly and deeply in love with Walter Johnson, but they believed that she would, and settled her destiny as such, but she did not. No one ever doubted that he loved her, and I have heard that her picture hangs to this day in his parlor, with her long hair hanging loosely down her back. When your father came, an ideal physical man, and handsome, there was a hot contest in which he carried off the prize. You know how proud and stubborn your grandfather was."

"I know nothing about him," said I, "except I have heard mother say that he was a lawyer by profession."

"He favored Walter Johnson's suit, and when she married your father in preference to his choice, he was very angry and disappointed. He sent for your father and mother one day, and when they came, thinking that he had forgiven them for loving each other, he handed them one hundred dollars in cash; 'This is your share; do me the honor never to trouble me again.'

"Your father returned the money and told him that if he was not his wife's father he would resent the insult in a different and more effective manner.

"They went away, and never spoke again to him, as your parents left this neighborhood and never returned.

"Your grandfather adopted one of his distant relatives and educated her, as he did your mother, his only child. After several years had passed Captain Johnson married the adopted daughter and they have lived happily together ever since. Your grandfather died and willed one half of all that he had to Mrs. Johnson, and the other he placed in the Petersville Bank, as your mother's share if she re-

turned and called for it in person; if she did not it was to go to a distant relative. I suppose that most every one has forgotten the will by this time unless it is Captain Johnson. There was a provision in the will to the effect the money must remain in bank forty years after your grandfather's death."

"Can that will be produced?" I asked excitedly.

"It can, as I have saved it, with the hope to reconcile your mother, whom I wronged when I spoke harshly about your father, but I could not find her, though I have tried hard to do so. I had come to the conclusion that she too had gone unto her father and that it was in vain to hope that I might be able to put her in possession of what was rightly and justly hers. That is all, Mr. Lampkins," she concluded, "unless it be something that I can do to right the wrong."

She turned and dipped the bucket into the clear spring water, and as she did so a tear flowed down the brook and on to the sea.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DIFFICULTY WITH PAINTER.

I COULD scarcely believe everything that I had heard and yet I had no right to doubt it. So many strange things were coming to light I was living in one continual surprise, and surprised at nothing that I heard, or saw, or thought. I had seen my mother's picture hanging on the parlor of her rejected lover, with her hair hanging loosely, as described by Mrs. Perkins.

I asked Lucy whose picture it was, and she said that it was "a distant relative and a daughter of her mother's adopted father. She moved away," she continued, "and we have never heard from her."

I was still gazing at the picture, which was really a splendid piece of work and beautiful.

"Don't you think that she is pretty?" asked Lucy.

"She is, but you know I am partial to brunettes."

"And I to the blondes."

"Who did this pretty cousin of yours marry?"

"I have forgotten, but papa will remember, and I will ask him some time."

"You must not do that."

"Why?" she asked somewhat surprised.

"I cannot explain why now, but I will tell you some time if you will promise to say nothing about this to him."

"Have I not promised to do everything that you want me to?" She said this with her face upturned to me, as though she thought I doubted it.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lucy; I——"

"Lucy now, please," she broke in; "I love for you to call me by name. Won't you please?"

I promised her that I would, and took my leave.

I thought of all that had happened since I left home and trudged across the mountains in last December, scarcely five months since. I noted the changes that had occurred, and the difference between myself then and now. My heart, and thought, and life had changed in so short a time that it did not appear real. Some knotty problems presented themselves to me

for my solution. The Captain's melancholy seasons were one of them; they worried me, but why I could not tell. They were more frequent than usual. I had noticed that they invariably attacked him when I was with him, and each time that I saw him he was more sullen than before.

The story about my grandfather's will too was something that I could not understand. If the Captain was aware of it, and knew who I was, why did he not tell me? If he did not know me in what way could my presence bring about this sullen mood? Turn it over in my mind as I would, I could not make anything like a reasonable satisfactory explanation to myself. There was one sensible course that I could at least follow. I must first secure the will and then find the witnesses, but what if they should be dead? It had been years since it had been made and many changes had come. I could only hope against hope that all was well. I rode over to the Perkins homestead the next day and asked Mrs. Perkins to let me see the will. She produced a bundle of papers and unwrapped them; took from the center of it a writing yellow with age, but written in a bold business hand. I glanced quickly at the witnesses, and to my astonishment I found that

it was witnessed by Judge Fulton and Elizabeth Taylor.

"Who is Elizabeth Taylor?" I asked.

"I am," she answered, "that was my maiden name. He requested that I should witness the will and gave it to me for safe keeping. I have kept it ever since, and no one has known or even suspected it, except my first husband, who accidentally found it in looking for a lost deed."

"Your first husband?"

"Yes, I have been married twice. My husband died when we had been married two years, and I lived with my uncle until a few years ago when I married Mr. Perkins."

"George is not your own child then?"

"He is not," she answered, and I was glad to learn it, for I loathed the thought of calling any one cousin with a treacherous heart and revengeful spirit, such as I believed he had.

"You will let me keep this will, Mrs. Perkins, will you not?"

"I was requested to deliver this in person to your mother, but as you are her child I suppose that it would be right to let you have it."

I thanked her and assured her that it would be. I went out on the porch and talked with George and Jim, and left them in good spirits,

talking and laughing with each other and enjoying the pleasant evening.

When I was about half-way distant between the Perkins homestead and Uncle Eli's I sat down at the root of an old elm tree and read the will over very carefully. Mrs. Perkins had stated the terms of the will and the way that my grandfather had disposed of his property very accurately. When I had finished reading it I placed it carefully away in my inside vest pocket and walked slowly towards home.

As I turned a sharp corner in the road I came face to face with George Painter. He sprang quickly from his horse, that was panting, and lathered in foam, and blocked my way by stepping squarely into the middle of the road. I attempted to pass him, and as I did so he spit in my face and said to me: "You are a snivelling young coward."

He had his hand upon his revolver and I gripped mine, but as I did so I remembered the promise that I had made to have no trouble with Painter, and I hesitated.

"Was it not for a promise I have made, I would wipe the froth of a mad cur out of my face with his blood."

"Men like you have no promises that are kept to except to lie and steal."

"And you steal without any promise, and lie because you do not know how to speak the truth."

He made a motion as if to raise his whip, and said: "I have horsewhipped more than a dozen scoundrels with this lash, and I am going to add another to the list."

"Try it, and all the oaths and promises under Heaven won't keep me from pumping your worthless carcass full of lead."

My revolver clicked as I pulled the hammer back, and placed my finger upon the trigger. He heard the click, turned pale and stepped back.

"You," he said, "what have you got to try rival a gentleman, and aspire to the hand of a lady?"

This was spoken in an insolent tone and in a sneering way.

"More than you," I answered, "a clean heart and manly principles."

Here two of his associates that were present when he knocked my hat from my head at the hotel galloped up, covered me with their revolvers and said: "Give it to the d—d scoundrel, George," but George did not, for Uncle Eli and Phil had silently appeared upon the scene.

Uncle Eli knocked one of the ruffians from his horse with the butt end of his gun and was looking over the sight at the other when he turned his head to learn the cause of his companion's dismounting so abruptly.

"Drop that shooting iron, young 'un, or I'll drap yer," said Uncle Eli, pressing the trigger in an unpleasant and impressive way and the order was quickly obeyed.

Phil was not idle, and by the time that Uncle Eli had his second man disarmed George Painter felt the blow from his fist at the butt of his ear, and fell headlong upon the ground. His revolver flew from his pocket and his hold relaxed upon his whip. I sprang and grabbed the pistol; Phil caught up the whip and applied it to George Painter; it circled through the air so gracefully and the strokes were so rapid and strong that I thought that he must have been an ox driver in his time.

Painter howled like a hyena and begged for mercy. I heard Phil mutter between the strokes: "By gad I feel more like my ole Kurnel than I ever did in my life." He wanted to "lick," as he said, "the hull of 'em," but I suggested that we let them go.

"All right, Lampkins, but if I had known this sooner Painter would er get more, but

you're my Kurnel in this and I am jest obeying orders."

We disarmed them and told them to go and they were glad to have the chance. We turned and walked towards home. "You see," said Uncle Eli, "I was going down to the Captain's. I had jest got erlong ther side of ther little thicket this side ther house and I heard some one talking. I stopped and hearn 'em call yer name, and say, "Painter, I don't like Lampkins, and I would ruther that he would not see Lucy at all, but I can't prevent it, for I think she loves him and if I tell her that she must not see him it will only add more difficulties to overcome."

"You can stop it, Captain, and you must, or I will lose all," some one answered.

"I must try," he answered, "but can't you do something to help yourself?"

"I can, and by Heaven I will. I will tell you what it is; I believe you say he has gone down to Perkins.' I will meet him on the road and horsewhip him; that will intimidate him and lower him in Lucy's estimation."

"Don't do that," said the Captain; "from what I know of him he will be a hard man to handle, and I do not approve of this course."

"I can handle him all right, as I have no

need to remind you that I have licked worse men than him until they howled like wolves."

The Captain objected but he swore that he would. I did not wait to hear any more but galloped home and got Phil and started—thought I could meet yer first and come back with yer but he rode faster than we thought, so we came up in good time."

"By gad, I did lick that feller," said Phil laughing.

"Yes, you did," returned Uncle Eli, "and on this we are going to take the sacrament, not straight drinks, Lampkins, as you know that I didn't do any of ther fightin'; besides, he said in a lower tone, "I promised mother this morning not to take any straight drinks, but if I could er licked that hog-driver like Phil did, I'd a taken a straight in every fence corner 'twixt here, and home, by the eternal Devil, I would."

He produced his flask and said the same toast that he did when I had my first fight with Perkins.

I told him that I had been to church a good many times, but he took the biggest sacrament that I had ever seen.

"Yes, Lampkins, that was larger than I jinerally take; when we do some good fightin'

I love the Lord more. By—Moses and Aaron, if I didn't belong ter ther church, how I could cuss this evening."

When we reached home the sun was sinking low behind the hills; Mother Jones was busy about the supper table, around which we soon gathered and I ate heartily of the good things that she knew so well how to prepare.

Uncle Eli returned thanks and especially asked that Phil might be blessed, and finished by begging the Almighty to impress upon the people the importance of taking the sacrament.

We had finished supper and I had gone down to the gate and sat down upon the stile to enjoy the twilight when Henry and Minnie rode up; she handed me a letter and left Henry and I together.

"Read your letter," said Henry, "and then I have news for you." I tore the letter open and saw that it was from Lucy; she told me about George Painter's visit to her home that evening; that he talked violently and made threats when she told him she cared for me; after this he had held a consultation with her father and dashed away at a fast gallop. The Captain, she said, had been in a very restless mood since he left; she reminded me of my promise

to have no trouble with Painter and added "I know that you will not break it."

I shuddered to think how near I came to breaking it and was glad that I did not.

"Now, Henry," said I, "I am ready to listen to anything that you want to say."

"It is this, Lampkins: Minnie was telling me about Lucy having you promise her to avoid all trouble with Painter. I want you to be released from that promise, for you don't know the kind of a man that he is. You will have to break your word or be disgraced by his insults."

"I know more about him than you think I do."

"What! Have you had an encounter with him already?"

"Yes," I answered, "and if Uncle Eli and Phil had not come to my rescue some one would have been killed."

I then told him all about meeting Painter and how he fared in the little game that he proposed to play. His dark eyes glistened with anger. He arose and bade me good-by and said, "Lampkins, if you ever need a friend remember that you have one in me that is no coward."

CHAPTER XV.

DIXIE AND YANKEE DOODLE.

THE news spread rapidly and flew across the country on human wings that George Painter, the handsome and wealthy hog speculator, had received a severe horsewhipping while attempting to flog a country school-teacher, who was his rival. His friends were very angry, but I found that they were not so many as I expected, as there were quite a number on my side; things were growing ugly and began to have the appearance of a storm-burst. The nearer it came the happier Uncle Eli was. He would go about the place whistling "Dixie" in high spirits. Phil seized his old violin and applied the rosin to his bow and mingled with Dixie's soul-stirring notes those of Yankee Doodle.

"It's bound ter come, Phil," I heard Uncle Eli say, "and I want yer ter do yer best. Fight like yer did when yer licked six of ther Hensleys and four of ther Simpsons."

"I'm jest er spilin' fer it ter come."

"Captain Johnson will be in it, I understand, but Henry will be on our side for he is Lampkins' warmest friend; say, Phil," he continued. "I'll bet 'e'll fight like er cinnamon b'ar."

"And so will Henry."

I did not like to hear them talking in this way, for it had the ring of fight in it, and I had had enough of that kind of work and I knew that they meant what they said. I also knew that a fight of this kind could not blow over without bloodshed if it came to an engagement. This was a week after I had met George Painter in the road. I had seen Lucy but once and she told me that her father was very much opposed to my visiting their home. "He favors," she continued, "Mr. Painter, whom I detest to almost despising him, since I learned of his conduct the evening that he left our home."

"I will not come to your home if your father objects, but you will see me anyway, won't you?"

"Of course I will see you, for I could not think of living without that, but where and when I cannot tell."

I told her of Henry's wish that I might be released from my promise that I gave her,

"Yes," she answered after a moment's study, "he also spoke to me about it, but please don't ask me to release you, for fighting is horrible, but I will modify it. Avoid him all you can, but if he attempts to strike you, then defend yourself."

"But there are some things that it is almost impossible to keep from resenting."

"What are they?"

"He spit in my face when I attempted to pass him in the road, and had it not been for the promise, it would have gone hard with him."

"I am so glad that you kept it," she murmured, but I could see that her dark eyes flashed with indignation and her breast heaved with emotion.

She promised to write to me as often as she had an opportunity, and I left feeling happier; not that there were difficulties to overcome, but that I had some one with whom I could consult and who would aid me in the most difficult places. Difficulties when overcome are the sweetest part of life, and to engage a foe, wage a battle and conquer for one you love, is almost joy supreme.

No foe is formidable when inspired by love and enthused with ambition, such as was

mine in this battle for life and love. I realized that I must change my tactics and meet the obstinacy of her father with cunning, and avoid and outwit the defeated and desperate lover in his intended fight, that I might keep my promise and retain the esteem in which I believed Lucy held me. Days went slowly by. Occasionally I heard from Lucy but I did not see her, for she wrote that her father had positively forbidden her to see me and that we must try to win him over in some way. She closed her letter with: "Time alone can tell what the future holds for us, and if papa does not relent, at least allow me to see you soon, I am afraid that my firmness will give away, and I will defy even him to forbid me my sweetest pleasure, to see you again, my love."

I read this with bated breath and pressed the little message to my beating heart. That Lucy loved me I had no doubt, but the future looked dark and gloomy. I tried in vain to tear away the veil that hides the future and to peer down its dim vista aisles. I would have given all that I possessed—almost my life—to have seen and known how the drama would end. Would I win or would I lose? Would my fondest thoughts be dashed to pieces, or

would my most sanguine hopes grow and bloom into reality? Would the ambitions of my youth crown my old age with success, or would my hoary hairs point backward to a barren and wasted life?

I drew upon my imagination and found myself an old man with gray hairs and stooped shoulders, sitting around a light chip fire in a mountain hut, poor, ragged and deserted, and a tear stole down my cheek at Fate's cruel fancy thus pictured. I shook them from my eyes and repeated the true words of Owen Meredith in his beautiful *Lucile*: "Our deeds are our own dooms-men."

That odds were against me it was very plain, those who compared me with my rival, handsome and wealthy, and worshiped by the eight-by-ten Petersville aristocracy and the sniveling young dudes to be found in every country town. But I believed then, as I do now, that success depended upon my own efforts and that man's possibilities are limited by the lines drawn by the hand of God, and reserved for His own architecture.

My school had closed and I was walking leisurely back to Uncle Eli's, thinking of the many things that had happened since I came into the neighborhood. I turned to the right,

from my usual path home, and wended my way down the path towards the cliff where I had sat with Lucy the first afternoon that we had spent together. It had been one month since I had seen her, and her father was as stubborn in his demands as he had been at first. I did not know when I would see her again, but see her I would, I vowed to myself, as I reached the outer edge of the small clump of sassafras bushes on the same rise with the cliff, and about fifty feet away, I heard some one say: "Good evening, my little runaway." I hurried up to where I could see the cliff. Seated upon the same place where we had sat I saw Lucy and a few feet away was George Painter with his hat in his hand and an insolent smile upon his face.

The young lady sprang to her feet and started to leave when he said something to her that I did not hear, but he stepped quietly in front of her and said: "Keep quiet, little one, we are all alone, and I have a few things that I want to say to you."

"I don't want to hear anything that you may have to say."

"Lucy, you won't see me at home, and now we are here alone you shall hear me."

"If you know that I detest you, why do you

impose upon me in this manner? No gentleman would do it."

"You would listen to me once before that sniveling coward came——"

"Stop," she cried, "you shall not speak of him to me in that manner."

"Listen to me," he said, "for God's sake, listen. I love you, and your father——"

"My father has nothing to do with it."

"Let me finish, and do not interrupt me or I will do something desperate. We are alone; I saw you when you left home and I followed you here, and now you shall hear me. I love you, and I have taken an oath, if you refuse me, to kill Lampkins on sight. I swear that no other man shall ever claim you as his wife while I live. I would kill him. Tell me that you will be mine and I will begin life anew. Live for you and love you as never was woman loved. Refuse me and I will hunt that hound and shoot him as I would a dog."

"Shoot him now," I said, and at the same time looking over the barrel of a six-shooter at his gleaming devilish eyes.

Lucy sprang to my side with a cry of joy. He threw up his hands and begged me not to shoot him. I put my gun back into my pocket,

and he immediately assumed his cool insolent manner.

"You are not wanted here," he said to me, "as Miss Lucy has me to escort her home."

"I am here though, and have been for the same length of time that you have."

"You have been eavesdropping?" he demanded.

"I heard all that you said."

"No gentleman would listen to a conversation not intended for him."

"And no gentleman would impose upon a lady a conversation distasteful to her as you did."

"Lampkins, you are a sniveling coward and a cur," he said, growing red to the roots of his hair. "I have taken an oath to kill you, and why I don't do it now, I cannot tell."

"A coward never keeps his oath."

"No man on earth has ever called me that before, and you will regret it."

"I have never regretted speaking the truth."

He quickly drew his revolver and fired it and a lock fell from above my left ear, and a breeze lodged it among Lucy's curls.

"You are free," she said.

I sprang forward, and caught the gun as it fired the second time in the air. He was dis-

armed. He struck me a stunning blow over the eye that staggered me back to where Miss Lucy stood. I dropped the gun and prepared for his attack. I warded off his blow and struck him between the eyes with my fist and he went rolling down the hill. He came again the second, third and fourth time, and met with the same result ; the last time he arose with a stone in each hand.

"Drop those rocks," I said, as I covered him with his own revolver, and he did so.

"I will kill you for this," he hissed. "I would do it now if I had my gun."

"There it is," I said, throwing his gun at him, which sent him rolling on the grass for the fifth time. He got up and ran like a whipped cur and we were left together. He was scarcely out of sight when Henry came up and shook my hand and said to me: "Lampkins, that was well done. Painter must never enter our house again, and I will tell him so tomorrow."

"I am glad that you saw a part of it, Henry."

"I heard and saw it all, but I wanted to let him prove himself the cur that he is, and had he hit you, Lampkins, when he fired at you, I would have pulled the trigger I had leveled upon him when you disarmed the coward."

Here he shook my hand and continued, "Minnie is waiting for me at the brook; I must go. I will tell the Captain about this evening's performance and I feel sure that he will see Painter as he is. I am your friend, Lampkins, and will stand by you through it all." He pressed my hand and walked away.

"I am so glad, Mr. Lampkins, that you came up," said Lucy.

"And so am I."

"I wanted to see you so much that I thought to see the same place would do my heart some good. I came here and was thinking of you when he came up, and you know what followed. We sat and talked for a long while and then arose to go.

"Can I go home with you?"

"If you please, Mr. Lampkins."

"But will not your father object?"

"Not when he knows the circumstances. I think he will be pleased. At any rate you must go with me. I think that papa will see what a scoundrel he really is, and withdraw his objections to you."

"Has your father told you what his objections were to me?"

"He has none; he speaks of you as being a nice young man, but, always adds that there

are some things that I do not understand why I should not think of you as my lover, but what they are I do not know."

"Neither do I, unless it is because I love you."

"And I love you, and if possible I love you better since he has been so opposed to it."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CIRCUIT RIDER.

"HELLO!" exclaimed Uncle Eli, as I came up. "Seem ter be purty happy, from yer whistle."

"I am not at all miserable."

"Didn't know but that yer nerve was up a leetle."

"Why so?"

"Henry Johnson was er tellin' me that yer walloped Painter agin this evening. I hearn also that the Captain was dead agin yer with the gal."

"Oh, that's nothing; the girl does not object."

"That's right; that's right. Ruther have ther ole folks ergin me every time. Girl stick closer ter ye. It's er fack; she will."

"I hope so in this case anyway."

The Circuit Rider rode up and said: "Believe I'll git down and stay all night with yer, Brother Jones."

"Yes, git right down and make yerself at home, Brother Davis."

"Thank you, Brother Jones. I am always glad to be with yer. How is Sister Jones and Sister Minnie?"

"Fust-rate, fust-rate. Here is some of the best corn licker in this country. Won't yer have er toddy, Brother Davis?"

"No, I thank you, Brother Jones, I don't drink."

"Take ther sacrament with me, won't yer, Brother Davis?" said Uncle Eli, winking at me.

"No, no, Brother Jones, you must excuse me; I don't drink at all."

"Well, I do," and he poured out a small quantity in a glass and drank it, smacked his lips together and said: "Better take some best thing on the top side of yearth for a snake bite."

"Very good in its place."

"Yer bet yer life it is; I dearly love ter take ther sacrament, don't you? Go out to supper, Brother Davis. Yer know ther way; I want ter see Lampkins about er leetle business. Lampkins," continued Uncle Eli when the preacher was out of hearing, "that preacher is er rascal, and I'll prove it ter yer. I'll leave ole Bets sitting right here by this tree; and tell him erbout it in er confidential way. You be out here yer can see bout nine o'clock ter-night."

I promised to do so and went to supper. A few minutes before nine I took my post as watchman on "Old Bets" and in a few minutes I saw the preacher coming. He made straight for the bottle, pulled the cork and gave the bottle a tilt and walked rapidly back to the house. When I went in he and Mother Jones were discussing the evils of corn licker. Uncle Eli winked at me and broke in with "I don't keer what yer say I am goin' to have corn licker in my house as long as I live, by the eternal Devil I will."

"I am ershamed of yer, Eli," said Mother Jones.

"Ershamed and be d——d. Beg pardon, Brother Davis, but it's er fact, it's ther best thing on yearth for er snake bite."

"Mother, don't cry," said Uncle Eli, placing his hands on her head and kissing her, "I will not swear any more while the preacher is here, by——; there, I won't. Remember them rattlers don't yer, Samantha?"

"My ole Kurnel always kept it," said Phil, who had no special love for Brother Davis, "and I can lick any man that says anything ergin him, by gad, I kin."

"Let it all go, Phil, and let's not argy with Samantha and the preacher."

"All right, Eel. Mother is the best woman on the top side of yearth and I am with her."

"And so am I, Phil, with her and the preacher through and through."

The next day I rode over to Petersville and found Judge Fulton alone in his office.

"Take a seat, Lampkins. I am glad that you came over to-day. I have been thinking," he continued, "about taking some intelligent young man into my office. I desire Lampkins to make you an offer when your school is out."

"My school is out, and I——"

"Wait now, my boy, until I have finished. I want you to help me do writing and so forth and study with me, and by the September term of the Circuit Court you can get your license to practise and then you can do more work. You can board with us and I will give you one-sixth interest in my business. Come, what do you say?"

"Judge, your offer is too liberal, but I will stay with you if you will make one change."

"What is it?" he asked, somewhat surprised.

"I want to stay and study in your office, but I cannot take any of your income, as I am not entitled to it."

"I insist that you shall."

"I can't stay with you then."

"Lampkins, reconsider this matter, and act wisely. Take what I offer you, for you will earn it."

"I feel very much flattered, Judge, but my mind is made up."

"Let it be as you say then. When can you come?"

"Monday," I answered.

"Very well."

"Now that we have settled that matter I want to submit something to you, and ask your opinion, Judge, but it is necessary that no one but us should know about it."

"Saying nothing is a part of my success."

I took the will from my pocket and asked him to look at it.

He hurriedly glanced at it and then over his glasses at me, looked at the signatures and at the date again and laid the will on the table.

"What do you think of it?" I asked.

In answer to my question he unlocked a large safe; took from its vaults an old ledger, placed it open before me.

"Look at that," pointing to an entry dated March 31st, 1852. "Charging the drawing of a will for my grandfather, with a fee. The two dates correspond; see," holding up the will.

"Yes," I answered, "the will is dated March 31st, 1852, and you think that the will is genuine?"

"Certainly, my boy, certainly, and it is worth twenty thousand dollars with interest, which amounts to," said he, making figures on the paper, "\$36,000.00, interest, making \$56,000.00 in all. Quite a neat little sum, Lampkins, quite so."

"Is the bank worth that amount?"

"Many times more, sir. Your mother is a wealthy woman. I knew her up to her marriage, but I lost sight of her afterwards. Her father was my law partner for a number of years, and you are his grandson," and the old Judge shook my hand warmly. "Walk with me over to the bank and I will introduce you to the President and Cashier, and we will speak to them about this matter."

"No, I do not want to speak to them about the will, but I would like to meet them."

"I will speak to them for you."

"But I object."

"Why so?"

"I don't want them or any one to know about this for a while."

"But it is proper that it be looked after at once, and I won't let you do a foolish thing

that will hazard your welfare and that of your mother's. I will speak to them." This last was said as he arose and picked up his hat and cane.

"Hold on, Judge, remember your promise to say nothing."

"Yes, but you don't mean to hold me to that?"

"Certainly," I said, folding up the will and placing it in my pocket. "I will go with you now and you can introduce me as your law student."

"I think that you are doing wrong, my dear boy. Won't you reconsider this, and let me speak to the officers of the bank?"

"Not now," I answered as we entered the door of the bank.

The introduction to the bankers as Judge Fulton's law student admitted me to the best society in the place, and I received quite a number of invitations to attend dances, socials, picnics and little informal gatherings in that little out-of-the-way town. I attended a part of them, sometimes alone and sometimes in company with Miss Fulton.

When Painter was present he never spoke, and I did not pay the slightest attention to him. The spring ripened into summer and

with it came the examination. Henry and I were reviewing the first books that we had read and were asking each other questions such as we thought would probably be asked us on examination.

"Well," said Judge Fulton as he came into the office and sat down in his comfortable office chair, "are you going to accept my proposition and become my partner?"

"Oh, you will get your license all right, I will warrant, and we must settle this, Lampkins."

"Give me a week to think it over, Judge, and at that time I will answer you."

"All right, my son, all right. I like a cool-headed fellow, but remember that I must have a definite answer one week from to-day."

I submitted the proposition to Henry and asked him what he thought about it.

"I think that it is a splendid offer, but I had thought that we might form a partnership and that we could live on what we have until the practise came."

"Live upon what you have, for I haven't anything."

"It's all the same, Lampkins, what is ~~mine~~ belongs to my friends,"

One week from the time this conversation took place I was sitting in the office of Judge Fulton reading the certificate granting me license to practise law. My heart was light and I was deeply interested in my own thoughts. I did not hear Judge Fulton enter.

"Got them did you, Lampkins?"

I gave a little jump as he broke in so abruptly upon my reverie. "Here," he continued, throwing some letters down on his desk, "is something I think that will make your heart beat faster than anything that those judges said. That was the way it did me, Lampkins, when I was about your age."

I broke the seal hurriedly and read as follows:

"DEAR HARRY:

"I am both happy and sad this morning. Henry tells me that you made the best examination out of the entire class of ten who were examined. I am glad and congratulate you, but there is something that pains me very much, connected with your stay in Petersville. I have a letter that will explain itself which I enclose. I cannot believe and cannot think of doubting one I believe so noble and true as you are, but if it is——" (Here a tear blot-

ted out the word.) "Can't you come to Uncle Eli's Sunday and I will meet you there.

" Lovingly, yours,

" LUCY."

I took up the letter that she enclosed and read:

" DEAR MISS JOHNSON:

" I am your friend and trust that you will pardon the liberty that I take in addressing you. It is a delicate subject about which I wish to speak, and I sincerely hope that you will receive what I have to say with the same spirit of friendship with which it is written. Thrice have I attempted to inform you, as many times have I failed to do so, but being your warmest friend, I have at last overcome my prejudice and I feel sure that you will appreciate my position. It is about this that I wish to write. I am informed, in fact I have heard Mr. Lampkins say so, that he was your sweetheart, and that you were to be married at an early date. Whether this be true or not I do not know, for I believe he is of a low family and treacherous enough for a Judas. You are aware that he is in the law office of Judge Fulton and has worked himself into his

good graces, and has won the heart of his daughter, whom he is to marry soon. She does not deny it and everything is hustle and push around the Judge's preparing for the wedding. What rascally schemes he has used in making the Judge think that he has plenty of money I do not know, but that he has is a fact. I heard my father say that Judge Fulton made the remark that Lampkins was not so poor as people thought he was, and now, my dear friend, I trust that the truth of this statement may serve you and that you will see the precipice before it is too late, and that at least some day know that I am,

“Your true friend.”

My hand trembled so that you could plainly see it when I had finished reading this daring and brazen lie, while Lucy Johnson was looking through her tears at my mother's picture and indulging in a good cry.

I tore open another letter and to my surprise I found it to be from Miss Lucy also, telling me that she had heard of my engagement to Miss Fulton and that I had deceived her and that our relations must cease. She also requested me to send her letters home, and I would forthwith receive mine.

I was indignant and swore vengeance against the wretch who had thus stepped between my love and I, and stole from me my happiness. That the letter was from Lucy I had no doubt, but why she wrote two in the same mail I could not tell.

"Lampkins," said the Judge, "have you received serious news that you are so worked up?"

"Not very," I answered, trying to appear calm, but he was not so easily deceived.

"Come, my son, tell me all about it; possibly I can aid you."

"Oh, it's nothing that will interest you, on the contrary I fear that it might worry you."

"Is it over pretty Lucy Johnson?" he asked.

"Partly."

"And the rest?"

"You may read these letters and find out as much as I know."

I handed him the letters and watched him closely while he read them.

"Well, what of it?" said he, laying the letters aside.

"Some one has been lying, that is all."

"And can't you guess who it is?"

"I don't know that I can."

"Shall I tell you?"

"I would like very much to know."

"This young lady had a sweetheart before you knew her."

"Yes?"

"And you proved best man with the girl, and had a racket with your rival?"

I nodded.

"He then tried to deter the girl in the confession of love and an engagement. You appeared and another fight occurred."

"Yes."

"Now he has changed his tactics and is making a different fight—understand?"

"That does look simple, but who in the world wrote the other letter?" If Painter wrote this to Miss Lucy?"

"Quite as simple as the other; her father favors Painter's suit."

"Yes, but the young lady detests him."

"She does?"

"Her father knows that he has lost unless something comes between yourself and his daughter. Miss Lucy wrote one of those letters."

"Now can you guess who wrote this one?" holding up the one that I had last opened."

The writing is the same, I think."

"They are similar, I admit, but they are not

the same. The L's are different and so are the H's and T's and P's."

"Who did write it if Miss Lucy did not?"

"Her mother," he answered, "and so, my son, don't let this worry you. You can have my horse to-morrow and ride over to Uncle Eli's, where you will see pretty Lucy Johnson and settle this trouble, and be as happy as you both deserve."

"I thank you, Judge, you have done——"

"Never mind what I have done; there will be more to do for you before this affair is over. You may want my horse to go to Bristol. I had to steal my wife while her father gently protested in his sleep, and at any time that you need my horse and buggy, it is at your command. So now take a walk and come back here two hours from now and we will talk over our business relations.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT UNCLE ELI'S.

"HELLO, Lampkins," shouted Uncle Eli as I rode up to the fence. "Jest er thinkin' erbout yer, and mother allowed that you'd come over ter-day. Go right in. Mother will be pleased ter see yer. Talks erbout yer like you were her own son."

Mother Jones met me at the door and kissed me affectionately, and I must own that I was touched with the kindness of these good people since I had been among them. It reminded me of home, and my heart was so full that a tear glistened in my eye.

Phil dropped his fiddle right in the middle of Yankee Doodle; shook my hand, slapped my shoulder and said: "Blame my skin, Eel, he's more like my ole Kurnel every day; cry because a feller likes him."

"There comes the gals, and Henry," said Uncle Eli, and I went down to the gate and met them.

We sat down in the shade in the yard, talked

and rested, and in the afternoon we went up on the cliff where we had been the first Sunday evening I had spent at Uncle Eli's. I showed Lucy the notes that I had received (while we were sitting on the peak at the root of a sugar maple, the very spot where Painter had last approached her).

I explained them very much in the same manner that Judge Fulton did.

"Oh, I see; please forgive me," she said, placing her arms around my neck and hiding her head upon my shoulder. I raised her head and kissed her, and she smiled through her tears that wet her long dark eyelashes.

"An angel never sins," I said, "but are as pure as those tears."

"Oh, Harry, I am so happy, when I am with you," she said, nestling closer to me.

"Don't you always want to be with me, and then no letters nor misunderstandings will come?"

"Yes," she answered, "you know that I do."

"But you won't without your father's consent, and that we will never have."

"I am afraid not, as I have tried hard to reconcile him, and until now I have always put you off, but I cannot ask you to wait longer, if he don't consent."

"You know my circumstances, Lucy, and it may be hard sailing at first, but——"

"Don't," she broke in, "I will be happy with you anywhere, and we will earn a living together."

Henry and Miss Minnie had gone down from the cliff and were throwing stones into the water and watching the ripples that they made, a perfect picture of happiness. Henry had told me that they were to be married on the Wednesday following, and that I was to be there."

He said, "I will be in town Tuesday and you must come back with me that evening."

I promised him that I would, and he and his sister rode away.

Sunday morning Miss Minnie and I rode down to the schoolhouse where the Circuit Rider had been holding a protracted meeting; it was also quarterly meeting, and the preacher preached in the grove, as the house was too small to accommodate one-fourth of the congregation. Brother Jones was there and shouted with a good number of the sisters, and one or two good brethren. Sinners were gathered into the fold and many more were at the altar. There were tears shed and hands.

shaking even at the outskirts of the congregation. Uncle Eli was there and was one among the first to go forward and take the sacrament, and when he arose he wiped a tear away from his eye with his rough hand. My friend Phil had Captain Johnson cornered off and was arguing with him about fast horses, and swearing that his "ole Kurnel" rode the fleetest mare on top side of yearth, and that he could lick any man that said that he did not."

"Yes," replied the Captain, "to hear you talk one would think that your Colonel was your God, and fighting your religion."

"Look out, Captain, I'd as soon lick yer as not anyway."

"What for, Phil?"

"The way that you have treated Lampkins."

"Is that any business of yours?"

"Yes, by gad it is."

"You fotched him to us and then got mad at him for nothing."

"I thought that he was a gentleman, but——"

"Stop, Captain! By thunder, don't finish that or I will civilly be d—d if we don't mix, sure as gun's iron."

"Phil, I thought that we were good friends."

"We air, but I will fight as quick over Lamp-

kins as my ole Kurnel, and you know how quick that is."

The Captain was no coward, but he knew that Phil meant what he said, and all the preaching and shouting in Virginia would not have stopped him, and was partly out of respect for the meeting and partly out of respect for Phil that he said. "Let it all go, let it all go."

"All right, Captain, but I'll be cussed if you oughtn't ter treat 'em better. Look," pointing to where Lucy and I sat at the spring, "they are happy and you try to interfere. Gad, it makes my blood bile."

"But, Phil——"

"No buts about it. I loved a girl once and my heart was as gentle as a woman's until a scoundrel with his forked tongue came between us; when I saw her agin she was dying; I took her little hand in mine;" here he stopped to wipe away a tear, "and she told me about it, and by the Lord I left to keep from horse-whipping her father. You've loved a girl, Cap'n."

"That's so, Phil, and I may be wrong. I will think about it anyway."

"Papa is coming down to the spring I think. Won't you speak to him, please?"

"If he speaks to me I will; if he don't I will not."

"Good morning, Mr. Lampkins," he said, when he came up and extended his hand.

I shook hands with him.

"Won't you take dinner with us?" he asked.
"We have dinner on the ground."

"I have promised mother Jones, thank you."

"I'll see that he comes, papa," said Lucy, when her father had turned to go away.

"Now you must, Mr. Lampkins, won't you?"

"But I have promised——"

"Oh, that's all right. We can spread our dinner together and you can eat with both of us, Mr. Contrary."

"Good morning, my boy, good morning," Judge Fulton greeted me as he came in and sat down in his usual place, the next morning.
"Had a nice time while you were away did you?"

"Splendid, I thank you. I attended Quarterly Meeting yesterday."

"Any shouting?" his daughter asked.

"Yes, a good deal."

"I do love to hear those good people shout. I think that they enjoy it so much."

"The Elder and Circuit Rider are the greatest men that ever darken their doors, but there is more religion in one of those log cabin homes

than all the contemptible aristocracy this town has ever seen."

"That's right, my boy," said Judge Fulton, "I admire a young man that can tell the truth whether the people frown or smile."

Tuesday came and Henry was in town early and we were walking down the street when we met George Perkins. "Good morning, George," I said, extending my hand.

"Don't speak to me, don't do it while yer go round the street with that lout," pointing to Henry. "I am going to marry Minnie Jones myself and not him."

Henry sprang forward and would have hit him, but I caught him. "You are a liar, George Perkins."

"That's all right. I've come to get ther license and we are gwine ter git married ter-morrer."

Perkins was drunk and I pulled Henry away, and as I did so he said to him. "You'll answer to me for this, Perkins, before the sun rises again."

"Allus loved the gal, and I am not gwine ter be cheated out of her now; yer bet yer life I ain't," I heard Perkins say while we were walking as rapidly away as I could get Henry along.

"I would like to thrash that scoundrel, and I will, Lampkins, for his impudence."

"He is drinking, Henry, and you can't afford to mix up in anything of that kind now; to-morrow is your wedding day."

"You mixed with him in one fight and now do you think that because I am to be married to-morrow I will let him handle lightly the name of the girl I am to marry. I'll tell you, Lampkins I won't take it."

Perkins grew uglier as the day grew older, and much to my surprise left town without being killed. He raised a row with the clerk, cursed the sheriff and quarreled with every one that would notice him except George Painter. They were on the best of terms and visited the saloon many times during the day.

Judge Fulton requested me to ride over to Squire Burton's that afternoon and attend to a suit that he had, saying, "This will be a starter for you."

Henry was very much annoyed because I could not keep my engagement to ride home with him, but insisted that I should be on time for the wedding.

"I will be there, old boy, don't worry," I told him when I rode away.

I arose early and had everything in readiness

to leave with the sunrise. The horse sniffed the air sweet with dew and sped along the road at an easy but swift pace. When I came in sight of the place where the road forked, where I had promised to meet Henry, I saw several men waiting, instead of one as I had expected. I saw Henry among them. I thought that he was aiming to give me a surprise by inviting quite a number of his friends at what I thought was to be a quiet wedding. I drove up and found Henry in the custody of the sheriff with ropes tied around his arms. George Painter was there and affected a show of great distress. "What is the matter here?" I asked as I jumped from my buggy.

"Haven't you heard?" Henry asked.

"Heard what?"

"It is this, Mr. Lampkins," said Painter in his cool, sarcastic way, "Johnson shot and killed George Perkins and he is under arrest charged with murder."

"You seem to know a great deal about it," I said.

"I know quite too much, I am afraid," "but——"

"Not another word from you, for I don't believe a thing that you say, and I warn you

now that I will probe this thing to the bottom, for I believe that you killed Perkins."

I watched him closely while I made this deliberate charge and his face turned very pale.

"We'll take charge of you," said Painter, stepping in my direction, "if you——"

"Stand back," I said; "attempt to place one of your dirty fingers on me and I will shoot you as I would a dog."

"Lampkins," said Henry, "I am glad that you think that I am innocent, but I am——"

"Stop, Henry, for God's sake stop."

"Perhaps you know best, Lampkins, and I will do as you say."

Henry and Lucy were on their way to Uncle Eli's when they had been stopped by the Sheriff and Henry was arrested. George Perkins had been shot the night before by a forty-four revolver, so the doctor testified before the coroner's jury.

They brought in the following verdict: "Came to his death by a pistol shot fired by some unknown party."

Painter had sworn out the warrant against Henry, and stated the row in town the day previous and the threats that Henry had made while angry. That Perkins had left town that evening, and Henry a few minutes later. Some

of the crowd declared that Henry would have made a confession if I had not stopped him. I went over to the buggy where Lucy sat pale and calm.

"Can you help us just now?" I asked.

"Anything that is in my power I will do. Command me and you will find that I am strong enough to obey."

I tore a leaf from my day-book and wrote a note. Give this to Uncle Eli and tell Miss Minnie what has happened, but to be brave, and we will clear this up very soon."

She gathered up the reins and struck the horse with a resolute hand and started on her errand. I spoke a word or two to the sheriff and left in a fast gallop for Captain Johnson's, three miles away. He met me at the gate. "Captain, I have very unpleasant news to communicate." I then stated as nearly as I could all I knew concerning Henry's arrest.

"It is a serious case," he said.

"We don't mind the case; it is something else we dread."

"What is it?"

"A mob."

"That's a fact; we have a dangerous crowd to deal with. Wait until I get my gun."

He dashed into the house and dashed out

again, buckling on his pistols as he came running down the walk. He jumped into the buggy and we drove away.

"Phil and Uncle Eli will meet us there," I said.

"How will they know about it?"

"I sent them word by Miss Lucy.

"With them and the sheriff we will make it lively for any crowd that these hills can produce."

When Miss Minnie heard it she turned pale, but did not cry. Uncle Eli caught up his gun, and Phil blurted out, "Gad, another order from my ole Kurnel."

Mrs. Johnson almost went into hysterics, and mother called upon the Lord to have mercy upon them. When we reached the fork of the road where we had left Henry and his captors, they were not there. Some one in passing by said, "Having a lynching just around the bend."

"Great God!" groaned Captain Johnson. I lashed the horse into a run, and as I turned the bend in the road we saw a howling crowd two hundred yards ahead of us, and some one of them threw a rope over a limb; two men dashed up, their horses covered with foam, and they spurred them right into the midst of the

mob that were howling and shouting like demons and thirsty for blood. A shotgun swung around in the air, and George Painter dropped with a fearful gash in his head; at the same time a shotgun fired, and the man who was tying the rope fell from the tree with a thud. Jim Peters threw his pistol on Uncle Eli, and none too soon did two pistol reports simultaneously ring out from a flying buggy and Peters' pistol never fired. I leaped from the buggy and cut the rope from Henry's neck and arms, and placed a gun in his hands. The cowards that could coolly hang a man who was in their power and helpless, fired a harmless volley in the air, and ran like a pack of whipped curs. The sheriff made his appearance white and scared, and Henry told him that he was ready to go with him, and handed me his gun.

"Hold on er minit," said Uncle Eli, "better take something on this, I guess. A straight drink, Lampkins, a straight drink, sir."

"By gad!" exclaimed Phil, "best fight yit. My ole Kurnel would er enjoyed that fight; wish it had er lasted longer."

Captain Johnson was crying like a child. He held out his hand to me and said, "I have done you a great wrong, Lamp——"

"Not now, Captain; let that go by for the present. We are too busy to listen to confessions, now. We must get Henry out of this."

We drove to town and bail was refused Henry, but he bore it bravely. When all had been done that was in our power to make him comfortable in the little wooden jail, Captain Johnson, Uncle Eli and Phil left for home. I was sitting in the office and thinking of the strange turn affairs had taken; I had related the circumstances to Judge Fulton and secured his services in Henry's defense.

"Pretty bad case," said he, "but we will see what we can do; I have pulled many a fellow through worse than this."

Some one poked their head in the door and asked, "Is Mr. Lampkins in?"

"Yes, come in."

"No, I ain't got time. Young Johnson wants ter see yer a minit."

"All right," I replied, and went with him. I found Henry sitting on the bed of straw with his coat and vest off. When I entered he motioned to me to sit down on the bed by him.

"What is it?" I asked, when I had seated myself.

"I want you to promise me, Lampkins, that you will do me a favor."

"I hope that you know there is nothing within my power that I would not do for you. Tell me what it is?"

"I want you to take this message that I have written, to Minnie, and while you are there will you go by home and tell mother and Lucy that I am all right, and——"

"Of course I will, you——"

"Hold on, now, I am not through yet. They will want to come here and see me; that is one thing that they must not do. You will tell them this, and get them to promise that they will not. I know they will want to see me, for they love me, but I can't bear to see my mother crying."

A tear dropped on my hand and one fell on his as they clasped each other in a good-by.

"When do you go, Lampkins?"

"Now," I said and turned away.

In my heart love and sorrow mingled and romped together like playmates. The stars were peeping when I rode out of the village, and the dew fell silently and wet my horse's mane. The old owl hooted his rough dismal note, and my tears fell like rain and mixed with the dew as I rode along, bearing my silent, sad, sweet message. The old watch-dog barked and romped as I entered the yard.

He leaped upon me and licked my hand and played around me. The wooden clock, which the Circuit Rider knocked down and broke, had been repaired and was knocking the seconds into minutes and the minutes into hours, struck eleven as I walked up the path. I heard voices inside.

"You are a trump, Phil, blamed if yer ain't."

"Yes, learned it from my ole Kurnel."

"Couldn't help swearing ter-day, Phil, d--d if I could. Don't tell mother."

"We must go to bed, Eel; Lampkins may need us ter-morrow."

"All right, Phil; here's ter Washin'ton, Lee, Jackson, Phil, your ole Kurnel and Lampkins——"

"And Abraham Lincoln," broke in Phil.

"No, I'll be cussed if it is; your ole Kurnel is the only Yankee on top side of yearth that I'll drink a health to."

"Washington was a Yankee."

"No he wasn't. He was a born Virginnyian and nobody has accused Virginny of being a Yankee state."

"But——"

"No buts about it. If yer say ernother word, Phil, I'll strike yer ole Kurnel out; so here goes."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRY IN THE JAIL.

MISS MINNIE had not yet retired. When she heard me talking to her father she came into the room where we were.

"Phil," said Uncle Eli as he arose, his thin, straight, white hair as smooth as the plumage of a bird and his nose large and slightly Roman, "we must put up the boy's horse."

"All right, Eel Lampkins, old boy, make yourself at home. Be back in er minit."

Minnie Jones looked at me with her large blue eyes, innocent, trusting and pure, that asked a question more forcibly than words could have done. Her face was pale with anxiety and her heart throbbed violently with wounded love, and her pleading look touched me, for I had learned to love her like a sister. I placed the little missive in her little white hand and it trembled as she unfolded it. Her face brightened somewhat with a sad smile as she read the note.

"Thank God, Har.," she said, "that we have

such a friend as you are," and the pent up tears gathered in her eyes and her chin quivered as they gushed down her face.

"Don't cry, little sister," I said, as I took her hands from her face.

"I won't cry, for it's not brave to cry, and my heart has already taken the vow that my lips would have taken to-day, and in this first great trial I'll not grow faint-hearted, for I love him so."

Another day with its uncertainties, its trials and joys and sorrows, burst forth in full splendor. The young day was so beautiful, bedecked with morning glories and flutter of the pure sunlight, that it must have made sad hearts glad. Before I rose I heard Uncle Eli in the yard below my window:

"Say, Phil, bring that fiddle out here and play that piece you played the first time that I saw you." In a few moments the air vibrated with music and Uncle Eli kept time, unconsciously, with his foot to "Soldiers' Joy."

"Thirteen years ter-day, Phil, since I first heard yer play that. It's the sweetest tune on yearth."

"Yes; wish you could er hearn my ole Kurnel play it. Cry in spite of h—l."

"Phil, I am eighty-one ter-day. I have

An Interview with Henry in the Jail. 157

known yer thirteen years. We've been in some tight places together, and I love yer like er brother."

"Gad! we have, Eel, and I never was with but one man that could fight jest like yer can."

After breakfast I rode over to Captain Johnson's. Mrs. Johnson met me with eyes swollen from tears. Lucy was pale, and sat quietly listening as I told them that Henry did not want them to visit him while in prison.

"Do you think that it will take long to liberate him?" asked his mother.

"I trust not. We will do the best that we can to get him a trial in next month."

"Is the evidence strong against him?"

"Oh, mother," said Lucy, "don't talk as if you think that he is guilty. I know that he is innocent; don't you, Mr. Lampkins?"

"I believe him to be," I answered, knowing that I was not exactly telling the truth, for I feared that he had killed George Perkins in self-defense, but I did not believe that he thought that he did.

I had been in town but a few moments when Judge Fulton proposed an interview with Henry. When we reached the jail we found

the keeper lying under the shade of a locust on a sheep skin and lazily fighting the flies that were flying around him.

"Heowdy dew, gemmen," he drawled out as though it was an effort for him to talk.

We spoke to him and told him our business.

"A-l-l r-i-g-h-t," he returned, sitting up and lazily rubbing one eye, and yawning as though he had just been waked from a nap.

"T-h-a-t f-e-l-l-e-r is holding up all r-i-g-h-t; gritty as sandstun."

We found him pretty much as I had left him sitting on his bed. He greeted us kindly and asked us to be seated.

"Now, Henry," said the Judge, "tell us all about what occurred between the time that you left here and the time that you reached home on last Tuesday evening. Tell us everything so that we can go at this case in the right manner." After a moment's hesitation he gave us the following :

"There is but little to tell that you do not already know. I left town about half-past five in the evening and rode slowly towards home. I stopped where Lem Perkins was cutting some grass for his mules. I talked a few minutes with him, probably four or five. He said during our talk his nephew George had passed

An Interview with Henry in the Jail. 159

there just ahead of me and was pretty boozy. It was then getting dark. I rode on, thinking something that cannot in any way affect matters now. I had not gone far when I heard some one say : " Damn you, you shan't rob me of that girl ! " I did not know who it was until he jumped into the middle of the road when I recognized George Perkins. He drew his revolver and shot at me. I returned the fire. He ran by me, and as he did so I wheeled my horse and another shot rang out, and he hollered but kept on running. I don't believe that I fired the last shot. I may have killed George Perkins, but I don't believe that I did. It is true there were two empty hulls in my revolver, but I don't remember of ever firing but the one shot. My father must have shot the other one when my pistol was laying up at home. I rode home, not knowing that he was hurt badly. I did not say anything about it for I wanted everything to be pleasant on my wedding day, and how it turned out you already know. These are the facts and this is all that I know about it."

" Where did the ball hit Perkins, Lampkins ? "

" Between the shoulders, Judge, and lodged just below the heart. "

" Then he could not have shot himself. "

"Did you see any one else, Henry, at this time?"

"I did not, but I thought that I heard some one running. I may have been mistaken about that."

Judge Fulton sat with his head hung low, a habit that he had fallen into when thinking deeply. Some time he sat thus and not a word was spoken. When he arose to go he shook Henry's hand and said: "Don't grow despondent; you will come out of this all right or I am greatly fooled."

We walked in silence to the office and seated ourselves in our usual places. After a while he turned to me. "Lampkins, this is a bad case, and just how to go at it, I am puzzled to know. I do not believe that Johnson shot young Perkins intentionally, but circumstances are against us. Let me see," he continued, talking more to himself than to me—"had a quarrel with Perkins in the morning; was prevented from striking him; threatened to kill him before sunrise; left town within a few minutes after Perkins did; passed Lem Perkins's about a half a mile behind him; Perkins was found dead with a shot in the back; same calibre as Henry always carries; two chambers of his revolver empty and one of Perkins."

An Interview with Henry in the Jail. 161

"My God, Judge," I exclaimed, "are you going to prosecute the man?"

"I am going over exactly what they will prove, and to refute this we must either prove an alibi or show who did kill Perkins; if we can't do this it looks serious for young Johnson."

Perspiration stood out in great beads upon my forehead, I had not thought of the case in this light and I almost felt angry with Judge Fulton for what he had said; but that his logic was good, was clear even to my mind, numbed as it was with friendship almost akin to love. I vowed that I would clear up the mystery and prove who killed Perkins, but my heart sank within me when I thought of Judge Fulton's analysis. It disturbed my sleep and annoyed me when I was awake. One day as I sat thinking, trying to determine upon some plan of action, some one rapped on the door. "Come in," I said without turning around to see who it was.

"Har, aren't you going to speak to me?" and I faced about and shook hands with Minnie Jones.

"I want you to go with me to the jail;" she said. "Please don't object, it will be all right with Henry."

I went with her.

"Minnie, why did you come here," he said.

"To see you," she said, holding out her hands to him. He caught them and pressed them to his lips, and his arms stole gently around her as I slipped out and left them together.

When I returned they were talking as though they were sitting in the parlor at home.

"Will you always love me, even if they—"

"I will always think of you as I do now, and if they were to convict you I would wait and marry you when you returned."

He kissed her when she arose to go and begged her not to worry about him, saying that he would be all right.

"May I come to see you again?"

He looked at her a moment and then answered. "Anything that you want to do will please me. Good-by."

The door closed with a slam and the old log chain was replaced and the padlock was turned with a rusty key.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT HOME.

IT was a hot, sultry day in August ; it had been hot since the dawn, but it was the day that I had determined to leave the scenes of the past few months and look again upon the home of my childhood. I was up with the birds and set out on my journey at the sunrise. I did not travel in going back as I did when I came. I left home on foot, but this morning I sat behind a nice sleek horse that drew a soft-cushioned buggy. As I came, my heart was sore and my eyes oft dropped the briny tears on the hilltops where I stopped to rest, for I felt that my father had done me an injury ; but now my heart was glad ; nothing but love for those at home occupied my thoughts. I could see my father with his kind heart, and I knew that he loved his boys in spite of the grim spells that nature forced upon him. On the evening of the third day after leaving my friends in the hamlet among the blue grass hills I came in sight of home. Every familiar

object that met my eager gaze smiled at me through the long slanting silvery rays, each laden with kisses, and bearing a sweet message on its wings. The sun in his brilliant glory struggled to keep his head above the hilltops, to witness the meeting that he knew must come. I opened the gate hinged with an old hickory withe and an old shoe sole that squeaked a noisy protest to the young man that swung on its lazy frame in its childhood.

I was less than one hundred yards from my old cabin home, and old Tray, the watchdog, had been my companion in my boyhood, and roamed with me through leafy woodlands and barked gleefully his approval while I glided down the hillsides when they were capped and frozen by the feathery snow. He barked now in deep-mouthed welcome and played around me.

The cabin door swung back on its rusty hinges and in it stood my mother, who had shed a tear when I left home, and beside her my father. He placed his rough and toil-hardened hand upon her shoulder and it trembled. He held his newspaper in the other hand and tears, the first that I had ever seen my father shed, ran down his honest cheeks, and my little sister met me and threw her hands around my

neck and kissed me. I felt my mother's kiss and heard my father's welcome home. My brothers were glad to see me, and at my request Sam picked up his old violin and played as he did before I crossed the mountain. I inquired about the young man whose ribs I had broken and was told that he and the young lady had married some three months after I left.

My mother stroked my hair with a mother's gentlest touch while I told them of the beautiful scenery that I had passed on my way and how I had taught school and boarded with Uncle Eli.

"Eli Jones?" asked my father. "Why, he's the best friend that I ever had; helped me to steal your ma, Harry."

"Did he?"

"Yes, and say, mother," pressing her hand, "it makes me feel like I was young again, but I never loved you better than I do now."

I told them of meeting Captain Johnson and about his daughter Lucy and how beautiful I thought she was.

"Why, Harry," exclaimed mother, "you talk like you are in love with her."

"I am," I replied, "and I want yours and father's consent to marry her."

"That is strange," said father, "my son mar-

rying one of mother's sweetheart's children ;
I can't——"

"Father!" said mother.

"I know all about that," I said, "but we don't care anything about your difficulties. We——"

"Love each other," finished mother.

"That settles it, Harry," said father, "do as you please."

"Yes," said mother, "your choice is our choice, but all that we are able to give you is our good wishes. They are yours, my son, in abundance."

"Mother, you have more than that. You think that your father did not provide for you in his will, but he did. He has been sleeping in blissful ignorance, believing that he left you an independent woman and happy."

"What do you mean, my son?"

"I mean this, that my grandfather left you one half of everything that he was worth in money. It was placed in the Bank of Petersville, on interest, and is there for you now. The other half was left to his adopted daughter, Mrs. Johnson."

They were surprised for a moment.

"How much did you say, Harry?" asked my father.

"Several thousand dollars."

"I'll jest ride over thar with you and git it."

"But the will stipulates that mother must call for this in person. I came after her for that purpose and you shall go with us."

"We will go," said father.

The conversation then drifted towards people they had known in their younger days. I told mother how her cousin, Mrs. Perkins, had saved the will and begged her forgiveness.

The hour was growing late when I sought the bed that I had knelt beside when I was a boy and said my prayers, and wrapped myself in slumber, in the same sweet place that had encircled my childhood's dreams, and fell to sleep a happy man.

I rose early the next morning and walked down to the spring and dipped a gourd of clear cool water from its bursting fulness that flowed out over its white pebbly bottom, rippling, leaping, laughing as it hurried on to the sea. I bathed my face and hands in the same pool where the water poured over the rock below the spring house, as it had been my custom in the summer time since my early childhood. I was listening to the little trickling roar that the water made and fancying myself a child when my little sister threw her arms around me. I

gave a little jump, and she laughed and said: "What a coward, Harry, you have grown, to be afraid of me."

"You surprise me, Bess, but sit down, I am glad that you came."

"Yes, I brought you a towel, Harry. Won't you let me wash my hands with you, as you did before you went so far away?"

"Of course I will; what made you think that I would not?"

"Oh, nothing, but you look different; your eyes are the same and your hair is wavy, but you have changed some way."

"But I love you just the same," I said, placing my arm around her little slender waist.

"I am so glad that you have come back. Mother won't cry now when she goes up to your room, nor when I read the same books that you read to her. She asked me to read to her and I do, but I don't like to have her cry when I read your books, so I steal away and read them in the shade where you read them to me."

She looked up to me with her sweet childish manner, "Oh, Harry," she exclaimed, nestling closer and kissing me, "are you crying too?"

We bathed our hands and faces, I picked her up, as I did some three or four years previous and sat her on my shoulder. She laughingly

protested saying, "I am too big, Harry, but I enjoy it again."

Breakfast was ready and I sat down at my father's table and ate fried chicken that my mother had prepared. I don't think that I ever before or since so much enjoyed a meal as I did that one, for there is a great deal in the touch that set it.

You may be really fond of any dish, but let a mother's hand add the salt or soda and it sweetens it with a flavor so rare that it cannot be disguised, but I wot that it has been felt by every young man who reads this story.

CHAPTER XX.

PRESIDENT OF THE BANK OF PETERSVILLE.

DURING my absence, Judge Fulton with my consent, had the will set up. I returned, as per our agreement, upon the day that this was done, bringing my mother with me, and father promised that he would follow us within the week, being detained as witness in court.

Judge Fulton declared that the daughter of his former law partner and the mother of his present law partner should stop with him while she was in Petersville.

When the Petersville Bank opened up the following morning the officers were discussing the new railroad, that had been surveyed at least ten years before. The Norfolk & Western had determined to build this line to give them an outlet to the great West. The bank had decided to take several shares of stock and had the promise of handling the money set apart by the Company to build the road through that section of the country.

"It will increase our business very materially," said the President.

President of the Bank of Petersville. 171

"Ought to double it," whined the cashier, who a few months before had said when speaking of me, "I don't see what Judge Fulton sees in that young beggar he has for a law student."

"But we must treat him well on the Judge's account," the president had contended.

In the hottest part of the discussion and when the enthusiasm was running the highest with the Bank officials, over the new enterprise that was soon to start up, we entered the Bank, and asked to see the President.

"He is very busy, sir," answered one of the clerks.

"Anything important?"

"Yes, sir, it is important that my mother and I see him now."

"I will see."

He entered into a room in the rear of the building, returned in a moment and said: "He is very busy and if it is not too important, he will see you to-morrow."

"Say to him that it is very important, and that I must see him now."

He went to the same room and stayed about the same length of time with that distinguished personage, the Bank President, and returned again.

"He will see you. Right this way, please," and we were ushered into his august presence.

Before detailing the conversation that took place, the reader will better understand it, to know something of this man's previous life and characteristics. He was of medium height and slim, and about fifty-five years of age. He had cold gray eyes and hair streaked with gray. His face was thin at the jaws and his cheeks wore a tight miserly expression, when he spoke in his cold tone with measured accents, peculiar only to men in similar positions. He had been a retail merchant in time; bought goods heavily, and made some money in that way. His father had owned several hundred acres of land and bought cattle to graze it. Sold cattle and claimed to have lost heavily, when the truth is he did not. Sold his farm to his son before he made the debts that he yet owed, and paid them off with twenty-five cents on the dollar. The banker then sold the farm and about the same time his father died and left him the money that the cattle brought him, and with the money thus secured he had gotten himself the position of president of the bank of Petersville. The cashier and others retired as we entered the room. He

President of the Bank of Petersville. 173

motioned us to a seat and asked, "What is it that you wish to see me about?"

"This is my mother, Mr. Haines."

"Yes," he answered without rising, and looking at me coolly and almost with contempt.

"I suppose that you remember the late William Taylor, one of your old customers who died several years ago."

"William Taylor," he repeated. "Yes, I think that I do."

"This is his daughter, Mary Taylor, who married Lampkins over my grandfather's protest."

At this he opened wider his little eyes and appeared uneasy, but soon regained his composure. I hesitated a moment to give him time to think.

"Go on," he said.

"My grandfather adopted the present Mrs. Johnson, Captain Johnson's wife, also one of your customers. We always supposed that grandfather left his entire estate to her."

Mr. Haines turned in his chair uneasily.

"However," I continued, "there was a will made, dated the 31st of March, 1852, leaving one half of his estate to his daughter and one half to his adopted daughter. My mother's share was in money and placed in the bank of

Petersville to be hers with interest when called for in person. She is here ready to receive it."

"H'm, young man, that is a smooth story of yours, but we must have something more substantial to do business on. The bank will positively refuse to pay you or your mother anything, if this lady is your mother, on such proof."

"Do you remember how you and your wife quarreled when you were sweethearts, at our home, because you took me out riding?" asked my mother.

"Hem—hem, that may be; wait a minute, and I will speak to our cashier."

While he was gone I took the receipt from my pocket, bearing date, with the will, and signed by Johnson Haines as president of the bank of Petersville. This was his first year and his first receipt as president, Judge Fulton had told me.

"I am sorry, sir," he exclaimed when he returned, "but we cannot do business so loosely. Have you any proof that the money was ever placed here?"

I handed him the receipt; he cleared his throat several times; looked long at the receipt:

President of the Bank of Petersville. 175

"But how do we know who you are?" he said, trying to crush the receipt into a wad.

"Give that receipt here," I demanded.

"Beg your pardon; did not notice what it was."

This fib came as natural as though he was accustomed to it.

"Excuse me one minute, and I will bring proof of our identity, Mr. Haines."

When I returned with Judge Fulton he turned paler than he had yet.

"Here, Mr. Haines," said I, "ask Judge Fulton if he knows this lady."

"I can settle that without difficulty, Mr. Haines," Judge Fulton began. "I knew that lady in her childhood and up until she was married, and that she is William Taylor's daughter I can testify without hesitation."

"Might you not be mistaken. It has been a long time since you have seen her?" Haines asked in a quivering voice.

"No, I am not mistaken; she has played in my office when she was a child. I have nursed her and I know beyond a doubt who she is."

"Judge I have great respect for your word and judgment, but the bank can't pay out so much money on these statements. If it was

my own money, I would not hesitate, for I know what you say would be all right."

For the first time during my acquaintance with Judge Fulton I had seen his smooth temper ruffled.

"John Haines," he said, growing red to the very roots of his gray hair, "you have robbed people long enough, and I will see that you pay the lady this money, or I will close the doors of this bank at one o'clock to-day."

"But, my dear Judge, you see that——"

"Yes, I see you plainly enough as I have always seen you, rotten to your heart's core."

He opened the door and said: "Come, Lampkins, bring your mother."

"Hold on a minute, let me see," said the banker; "can't you and Lampkins meet me here at one o'clock this evening. We ought to be able to arrange this matter satisfactorily."

"We can," said the Judge, "but in the meantime I will prepare the papers, and if you don't act fairly you and all the officials of this bank will be placed under arrest, and the money and bonds, etc., will be attached before two o'clock."

"The scoundrel!" said the Judge when we were inside the office.

President of the Bank of Petersville. 177

At one o'clock we presented ourselves at the president's private office.

"Have a seat, gentlemen. Pleasant afternoon."

His manner had changed entirely. To meet him now would impress one that he was a quick, pleasant and shrewd business man.

"We have concluded to pay Mrs. Lampkins her money and I have made out a check to her for the amount."

He handed me the check and at the same time a receipt book and pen. "Please sign the receipt," he said, without giving me time to look at the check.

"This check is for \$20,000. I said. This amount is only the principal without the interest."

"Don't accept that check, Lampkins," said Judge Fulton; "the amount is \$56,000 not \$20,000."

"But surely, Judge, you cannot expect the bank to pay six per cent. interest."

"We expect you to pay exactly that, and no more, Mr. Haines."

"But the bank don't pay that much interest on deposits and would never give a contract to that effect."

"But the bank did give a contract to that

effect," said Judge, pulling out out an agreement from his pocket.

"Did you sign that?"

"Yes," he answered, "I believe that I did, but——"

"Yes, you signed it and the bank will pay the interest stated."

"We will never agree to pay it."

"All right," the judge replied, and walked to the door.

The sheriff came in, arrested the president and the cashier, attached the bank property and closed the doors.

"Who went on that attachment bond?" Haines asked when he reached the street.

"I for one," answered Judge Fulton, "and I for another," said Captain Johnson, as he came up in time to hear what Haines had said.

"There is another bond which you will be more concerned about than this one," said the sheriff. "We had better attend to that. Come."

Business men came to see Judge Fulton and talk over the bank sensation; those whom Haines had accommodated were there, and those he had ground beneath his heel came whining their complaints, hoping to reinstate themselves in his favor and bowing low to the golden calf.

President of the Bank of Petersville. 179

Some said it was a pity to lock up a man like Haines; others swore that it was a shame to put in jail a man of his standing and worth. This had but very little effect upon the stern old man who listened to them. He had pleaded before the jury so much and sat on the bench so long that he read human nature like a book.

"There is but one thing that can turn him loose."

"What is that?" several voices asked at once.

"Pay Lampkins his money and I will have him turned out before the sun goes down."

Haines and the cashier had been in jail less than one hour when they sent for us to come and have a talk with them. When we reached the jail he was holding the bars with both hands; the perspiration was standing out in great beads upon his forehead and hands.

"What is it, Haines?" asked the judge.

"I want to talk over this matter with you. Think, Judge, of the disgrace that this will bring upon me."

"You are the one to think of that."

"I thought that you were my friend, Judge."

"I am the friend of honesty and not of rascality. You know my motto: 'An honest beggar is better than a diamond thief.'"

"What can I do? What can I do?" he muttered to himself, wringing his hands.

"Pay the money over," the judge suggested.

"But the bank won't agree and I can't pay it with my own money."

"Oh, yes, the bank will. I have had it locked up too," said the judge, smiling.

"If the bank will pay it, will you promise to suppress this and make a deposit with us?"

"We have no promises to make," I answered. "The money is my mother's and she can do as she pleases with it."

"I think that we will pay it, but, Lampkins," he said with his most winning way, "you ought to give us a show and make your deposits with us. I assure you that we will always treat you fairly."

"I have no doubt about that, from the way that you have acted in this matter."

He wrote the check without replying to what I had said, and the cashier and himself were released from prison.

They walked to the bank and certified the

President of the Bank of Petersville. 181

check. The bank had been closed exactly one hour and fifteen minutes and we had accomplished our ends.

I placed the check in my mother's hand and kissed her.

"What shall I do with it, my son?"

"If I am permitted to make a suggestion," said I, "send it to the First National Bank of Lynchburg, Virginia, for deposit."

"Take it, Harry, and do this for me."

I sent the check by the first mail and it was promptly paid. My father came the day following, as he had gotten off sooner than he had expected, and when he heard of Haines' conduct he wanted to go over and thrash him, but I kept him from it.

"Say, Harry," said father, after sitting with his head upon his hands for some time, as was his wont when thinking, "I want to ask you to forgive me."

"What for?" I asked.

"For killing that black sow's pig. I was wrong. Wait until I get through, Harry," he said, when I tried to stop him. "I was wrong, and you can have all the hogs upon the place if you want them."

"That is in the past, father. I am your son and there is nothing to forgive."

Mother came into the office as I arose to go for my mail. As I crossed the street I heard my father say: "Strangest boy that I ever saw."

[CHAPTER XXI.

THE CONFESSION.

THE people who came to court passed on their way, horses, mules and carts, wagon loads of tools, picks and shovels to be used in the construction of the new railroad. Work had really begun and the road was a certainty. Towns were laid off in numerous places and lots were sold at high city prices, where no town had ever been. The streets are overgrown with weeds, and the corner lots, the hotel sites and the lot reserved for the bank building are utilized as cow pastures, and the great town that the smooth-tongued real estate agent pictured to the farmer never came.

The town of Petersville grew and prospered and swelled almost into a little city, and had of course changed its name. Things have changed in the little town, and the Courts are not what they were.

In the good old days when every farmer and his son came to town on Court day, and ate

their snacks, prepared by a good housewife, and swapped horses and bet on each other's strength.

If anybody got noisy and wanted to fight there were no pistols used, nor knives, nor rocks, to cut, bruise and bleed their neighbors, but a ring was formed in some convenient place and the noisy man was placed inside with the one who had volunteered to fight him. They fought like men with their fists and when it was over they shook hands, took a drink of hard cider or corn whisky and went home good friends. The neighbors talked about the fight while they sat around the family hearth that night or the log-rolling the next day. They never forgot a fight and seldom forgave an injury, but they looked upon a fight of this kind, not only as a privilege, but the duty of every man who felt like indulging in it.

However, when they fought an enemy they fought to kill pretty much in the same manner that Uncle Eli and Phil fought the mob that had young Henry Johnson in their clutches.

This was the day for Henry's trial. We reached no clue as to who killed young Perkins. The Courthouse was packed to its utmost capacity, and Henry sat in the bar with Judge Fulton and his father on one side

while I sat on the other. The trial was short and circumstances were very much against us; the judge on the bench had had political troubles with Captain Johnson, consequently we had but very little sympathy from him. The State made a strong case against Henry, and with the Court's ruling it looked well-nigh impossible to hope for anything but a verdict of "Guilty."

Witnesses testified to the quarrel on the morning of Perkins' death; that they were seen to pass houses in a few moments of each other, Henry being in the rear. Perkins' uncle stated that he had heard three pistol shots, fired soon after Henry passed his place. Henry made the statement that he gave Judge Fulton and myself, that the reader is already acquainted with. The attorney for the State made a strong speech. Judge Fulton followed him with a most eloquent appeal for the prisoner at the bar. Some of the jury shed tears when he pictured how he had been torn away from his betrothed, and incarcerated in the jail. He spoke of his father and mother and sister who were waiting to receive him at home again, and how the little fair-haired girl was waiting with throbbing breast and longing eyes to see him, and feel his love-kisses upon her lips.

He closed by referring to the early days of love, of those who sat in the jury box, and more eyes than one were moist as the old man took his seat and wiped the perspiration from his noble forehead. Henry whispered to me, "I think that they will convict me, but I don't believe that I killed him."

I arose and began my speech in a trembling voice; in fact I was trembling all over.

"If your Honor pleases and you, gentlemen——"

"Here, Lampkins" shouted Phil as he burst into the court-room, holding out a paper to me. He did not heed the sheriff's "Silence, order, gentlemen," but pushed his way to where I stood, blowing from exertion. "Had to ride like my ole Kurnel to get here."

I took the paper and looked at it. Judge Fulton jumped to my side like a boy and glanced at it.

"Ask the Court to allow us to introduce this as testimony," he whispered to me.

"If your Honor pleases, we would like to introduce this paper in evidence here, in the case now before the Court."

The Commonwealth's attorney jumped to his feet: "Now," said he.

I did not let him interrupt me but went on:

"I know that this is a late hour to introduce a witness, but where that witness will promote justice, I think that the law, sir, will be satisfied. I feel, sure, sir, that your Honor will concur with me in this opinion and that you will allow this to go to the jury when you have examined it."

I reached him the paper; he read it and said, "What has the State to say?"

"We have this, your Honor. I do not know what the paper is or contains, that the gentleman wishes to introduce, but the State and the defense have closed. Arguments have been made on both sides by counsel and we do not think that, according to the rules of your Honor's court, any evidence of any nature can, at this time, be introduced. However, I would like to see the paper."

The sheriff passed him the paper. He read it.

"We don't think that the jury should have this, sir, but the Court can say."

Judge Fulton arose. "If your Honor please, you will remember a case exactly of this nature in one of the Grattan's, and the evidence was admitted there and we insist on this going to the jury."

"Gentlemen," began the Judge, "I have been asked to allow you to consider this writing as

evidence in behalf of Henry Johnson, the prisoner at the bar. I have decided to do so, and I will read it to you."

"I, George Painter, being in a dying condition, and knowing that I must soon meet my God, do solemnly make the following confession. I killed George Perkins, not purposely, but by accident. We had planned to meet where he was killed and shoot Henry Johnson and Harry Lampkins as they came home that night. For some reason Johnson came alone. Perkins shot at him but missed him. Johnson returned the fire but missed. Perkins ran behind Johnson so that we could have him between us, and as he did so, I fired at Johnson and hit George Perkins and killed. I knew that I had killed when he fell, and my blood froze in my veins. I could have killed Johnson, but I let him ride away, and he did not even know that I was there. But I wished afterwards that I had killed him, and I spread the news and had Johnson arrested and made people believe that he had waylaid Perkins and killed him. We intended to hang Johnson and then Lampkins, but as in all other contests with Lampkins, he had defeated me. I wish that I could see him and ask him to forgive me,

but I know that I can't, as my time is short, for I am going now. May God be merciful to my soul, for it was all for the love of a girl.

"GEORGE PAINTER."

"Now, gentlemen of the jury," continued the Judge, "write a verdict of not guilty where you sit."

They did so, and Henry was free again to enter the sunshine of his heaven and of his love. I rode home with him and with us were my father and mother, Captain Johnson, Uncle Eli and Phil.

I heard Phil say to Uncle Eli : "Rode more like my ole Kurnel this morning than I ever did in my life. I begged him into making that confession."

"I have got drunk my last time, Phil," said Uncle Eli. "I will take just three toddies a day until the Lord calls me, which will not be long."

"Don't say that, Eli."

"Yes, it's so, Phil, I've drank my last straight drink and swore my last bitter oath. When the Lord calls me I want my soul to go and rest."

When we were on top of the bank about a half mile distant from the Captain's home we

saw that which made Henry and myself stir our horses into a faster gait. Three persons, two girls and a middle-aged lady, were shading their eyes with their hands and looking towards us. His mother kissed Henry and cried. Miss Minnie Jones was too happy to cry, but kissed her sweetheart, took his arm and walked up the gravel path with him.

Captain Johnson introduced his old sweetheart to his wife as his adopted sister, and in the parlor where hung the picture of my mother in her youth was a feast such as Belshazzar never witnessed nor enjoyed. We were intoxicated more deeply than were his revelers, not with wine but with happiness.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

FATHER bought a good farm near the little town of Petersville and moved there. It was near enough to have the advantages of the town and the good schools, without any of the disadvantages of town life.

My brothers worked on the farm and were happy in the delight they took in growing fine stock and blooded saddle horses. It was what they were intended for, and God honors every honest calling with success when we are contented and enjoy ourselves and strive to elevate that profession.

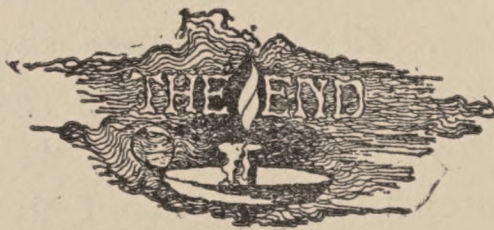
Uncle Eli's words were true. It was not long until we laid him to rest in the family graveyard, when the Indian summer had quietly begun. Mother Jones soon followed and sleeps by his side, waiting the bugle call, in the time to come when the "Angel of the Lord shall stand with one foot upon the land and one upon the sea and proclaim that time is no more!"

Captain Johnson comes to see his daughter at my house, and it was during one of these visits that he told me why he objected to my winning his daughter and why his melancholy spells came on when I was present.

"I loved your mother once, but I know that she was right in not accepting me as she did not love me. I hold no resentment against her, though it is the stubborn side of my nature that got control of me, and I am glad that you conquered me."

Henry is my nearest neighbor and we are partners, having lately bought out Judge Fulton, our former partner.

My good friend Phil spends most of his time playing the violin and cooing to the little golden-haired girl that prattles around our fireside. I can hear him now talking to her, and this is what he is saying: "Jessie, I love you as well as I did my ole Kurnel."



Jan. 22 1902

JAN 22 1902

1 COPY DEL. TO CAT. DIV.

JAN. 22 1902

JAN. 27 1902

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00021598148

